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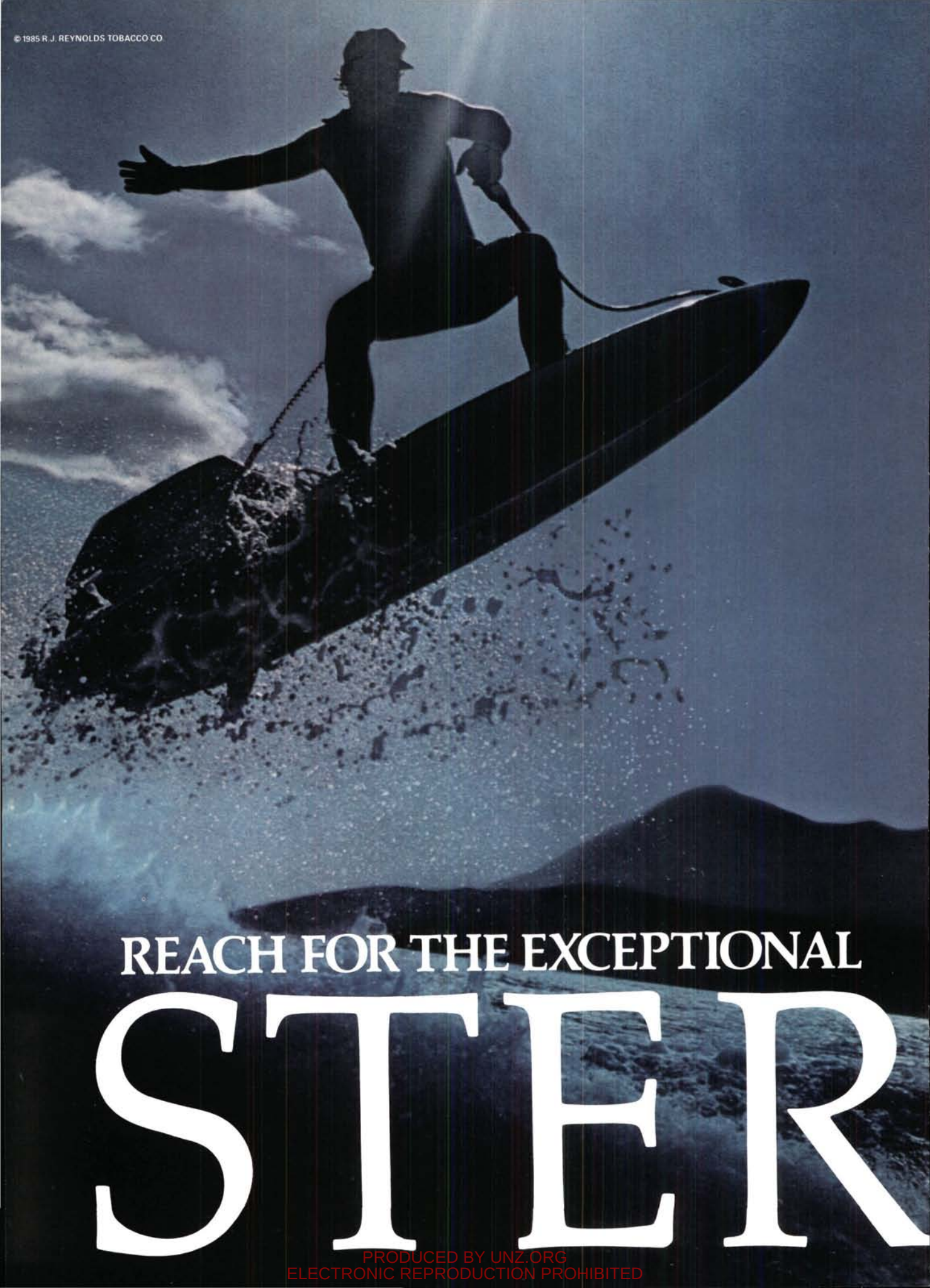
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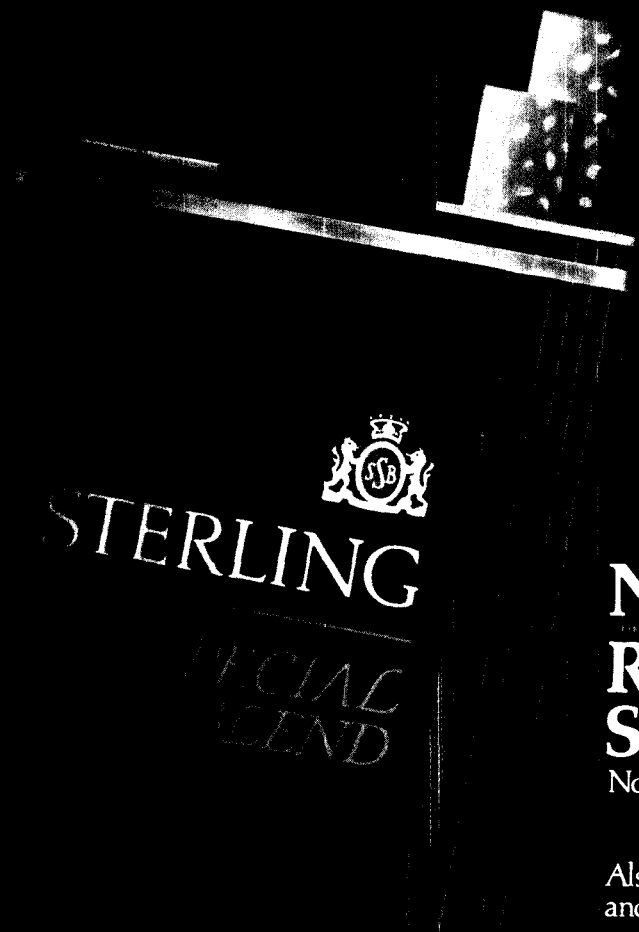
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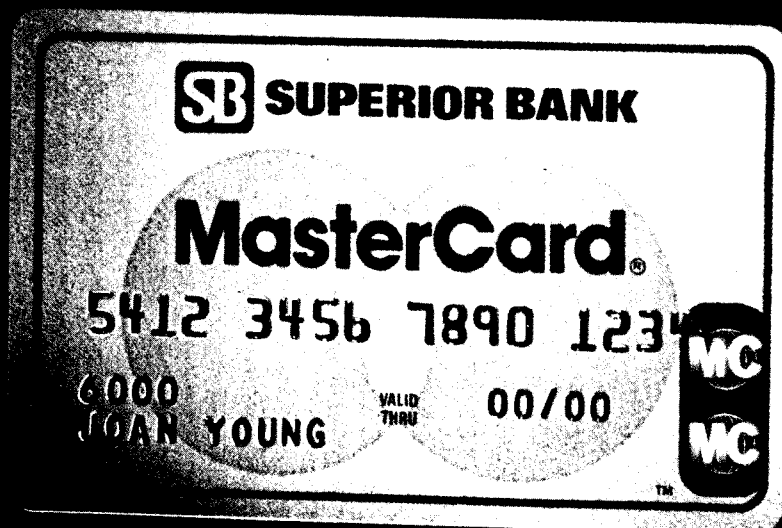
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

THE ROAD TO HILL 10

William Broyles's account of his return to Vietnam ("The Road to Hill 10," April *Atlantic*) was generally intelligent and undoctinaire, but in three respects I thought it lapsed into the use of old shibboleths. First was the notion that opponents of American participation in the war were all leftists. My experience in college (1964-1968) and later was that opposition spanned the spectrum and included centrist Democrats and Republicans.

Second was the notion that the leftist opposition romanticized the struggling Vietnamese people. For me and many others the issue from the beginning was whether the United States could, given the limits of its power and its Constitution, do anything to remedy the situation. We can hardly take comfort in having brought about the displacement of the Viet Cong by the North Vietnamese as the successors to the "puppets."

Third was the sneering references to hand-wringing by wartime visitors to North Vietnam. Does Broyles feel that visits after the war are okay but that those during the war were improper, whether or not they were legal? Does he feel that reports from those visitors were inaccurate? Or that the trips violated some fundamental value?

Broyles seems to hint that the Vietnamese didn't—and don't—play fair. No doubt. But the fight was one we picked, to make a geopolitical point we thought important at the time.

CHRISTOPHER HERMAN

Washington, D.C.

Mr. Broyles has addressed all the key aspects of the war and has done it lucidly and with courage. We simply believed that it was not our war. I still believe that I was right to condemn the war. I still believe that I was wrong to condemn the men who fought in it. The men (and women support personnel) who went to Vietnam did so out of necessity. Whose necessity and why are no longer important to them. We owe them our gratitude. It's about time we told them so.

ELIZABETH R. LEHR

Eastham, Mass.

William Broyles has performed a great service for Vietnam veterans the world over.

EARL AINSWORTH

Haddonfield, N.J.

"The Road to Hill 10" brought back nostalgic memories of my service in Vietnam. It is the first comprehensive report on postwar Vietnam that I have read, and one of the few pieces—fiction or nonfiction, war or postwar—not written by a leftist who, to quote Broyles, "all but canonized the North Vietnamese during the war with us."

It was interesting to note that Broyles mentioned seeing only one Amerasian, a teenage girl, although he did specify that she was the "first" he saw. This indicates that estimates of as many as 20,000 Amerasians still in that tortured land are exaggerated.

C. A. WILLIAMSON

Lt. Col. Ret.

San Antonio, Tex.

While I think I can understand why William Broyles was so shocked at the fact that Canada, with one tenth the population of the United States, was nevertheless accepting more Vietnamese refugees than the United States, this would not surprise anyone familiar with our history and traditions. During the Vietnam War itself we accepted many refugees too, but they were mostly young Americans! Our tradition of accepting the fallout from American problems may be said to go back all the way to the days of the Underground Railroad.

MARC A. SCHINDLER

Gloucester, Ontario

William Broyles's "The Road to Hill 10" is the best perspective on Vietnam I've read.

DAVE BYERLY

Lewiston, Mont.

No wonder we lost the war in Vietnam, with people like William Broyles, Jr., on our side. His article on Vietnam was another example of his liberal and anti-American views. He gave the Vietnamese another chance to put an American down. He accepted insults

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with no rebuttal and of course he "did not feel patriotic" at Hill 10, he "simply felt sad." What a crock of bull.

WILLIAM R. WRIGHT
Ex-Marine
N. Fort Myers, Fla.

"The Road to Hill 10" impressed this Vietnam veteran as a concise and balanced yet compassionate memoir of the author's return to Southeast Asia. However, given the shameful treatment afforded many veterans of this nation's longest war, it struck me as ironic, though fitting, that a former combat Marine would report on his second tour of Vietnam in a manner suggestive of rapprochement.

ROBERT E. MOON III
Burlingame, Calif.

JUSTICE BETWEEN GENERATIONS

As a mother of two young children who works full-time, I read with much interest Phillip Longman's report on our chances for Social Security some years down the road ("Justice Between Generations," June *Atlantic*).

I believe that Mr. Longman's conclusion—"Giving to each according to his circumstances rather than his age seems the fairest principle"—is right on target. How unfair that "more than a tenth of all Social Security spending goes to households with independent incomes totaling \$30,000 or more a year."

I understand that our parents' generation would take exception to not getting back from a system to which they contributed (or at least the working mates did). I wish, however, that we could persuade those with incomes over \$30,000 that less Social Security for them might mean more for their less-affluent Baby Boom children—not to mention their grandchildren.

It will be very interesting to see what burden the "love child" generation places on its own offspring.

CYNTHIA ROBB RITER
Longboat Key, Fla.

I want my grandchildren to be able to enter the job market as soon as they leave school. Yet I don't accept the charge of not meeting my share of the burden. I was, after all, *compelled* to contribute to Social Security and then shuffled off into retirement, even though I am still able to do a good day's work at

my chosen profession. Those of us who are in the able-aged group did not elect to be freeloaders!

A. L. SCHULTZ
Marco Island, Fla.

Phillip Longman makes a convincing case for the proposition that the Social Security system is bogged down—assuming that we accept as true the premises he propounds. I was, however, taken aback by his statement that "since 1984 individuals whose income exceeds \$25,000 . . . have had to pay federal income tax on the whole of their pensions." This, I believe, is quite erroneous—the law providing that one shall at most be taxed on half one's Social Security benefits.

THOMAS MALOTT
Langley, Wash.

Mr. Malott is correct. The editors, not Mr. Longman, are responsible for the error.

Phillip Longman's otherwise excellent article on intergenerational justice is marred by his comment that capital generated by an expanded IRA system should be used "for productive purposes, rather than merely to finance mergers and takeovers." To make such a remark, even offhandedly, is to betray a misunderstanding of the role of corporate acquisitions. Yes, some changes of corporate ownership mainly enrich individuals. But a large majority of changes are part of the restructuring of entire industries. Such restructuring, often necessary to redress the errors made by former generations of owners and managers, is integral to ensuring continuing productivity in the economy. As one who has many years to retirement, I want an economy shaped by market forces—including takeovers—to achieve the level of productivity needed to meet the very real challenges Longman describes so well.

PATRICK J. O'CONNOR
Redding, Conn.

BUSINESS IN SPACE

David Osborne provides a very good summary ("Business in Space," May *Atlantic*) of some of NASA's research activities in space and its efforts at commercialization. But although Osborne criticizes NASA's "ad hoc" approach to space development, he seems to endorse the thrust of the space agency's ac-

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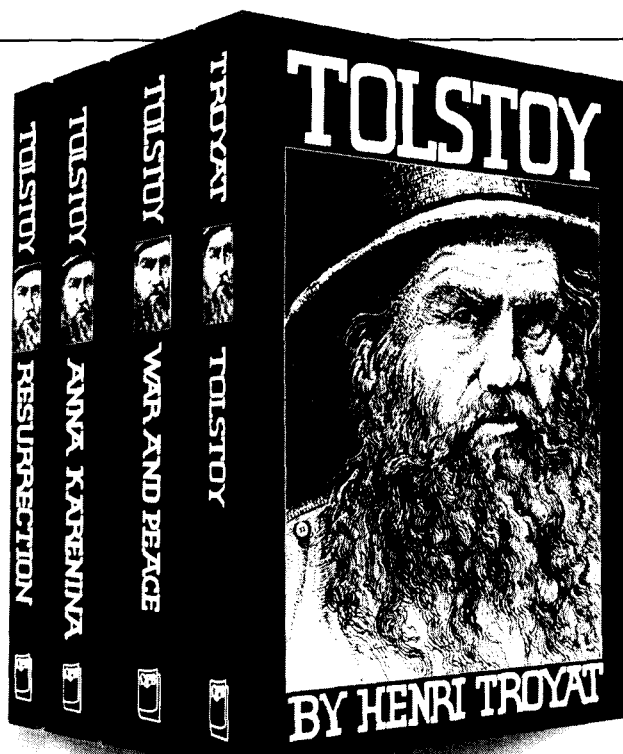
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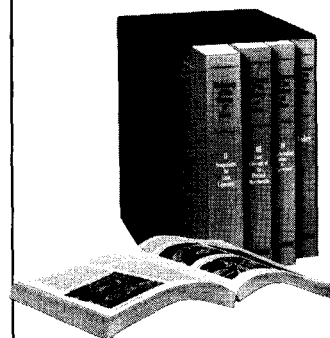
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tivities to date (the shuttle, the space lab, the space station, and so forth) and its efforts to attract corporate interest in space development. Osborne says that NASA has created an "infrastructure" to exploit space, but the heart of any viable commercial infrastructure is its transportation system—and a commercially efficient transportation system does not yet exist in space.

Osborne compares NASA space-commercialization activities (such as free shuttle flights for industrial researchers) to the federal role in the development of the railroad and airline industries. This analogy is flawed. When the federal government provided rights-of-way to private enterprise for railroad construction and, later, when it subsidized airport construction and developed an air-traffic-control system, it was encouraging the development of a commercially operated transportation system. This is not the case with NASA's activities in space: the space shuttle—magnificent machine that it is—is too expensive and complex for private enterprise to develop or operate. Further, its missions of greatest priority pertain to national security, not commerce. Though the space station will be an excellent commercial research asset, it is only a place to go to in space—not a transportation system.

We should ask ourselves, Is it possible to develop commercially an environment in which the government completely controls the means of transportation? Is American industry going to accept the risks inherent in the development of a new business frontier when the government controls the only means of access? To answer in the affirmative is to deny the historical precedents that Mr. Osborne cites.

DANIEL J. COLLINS
Los Angeles, Calif.

David Osborne replies:

When an Atlas/Centaur rocket launches an RCA communications satellite, is it not providing the infrastructure? And if the shuttle is used by McDonnell Douglas to manufacture drugs or to pick up drugs manufactured on board a Leascraft, will it not be providing the infrastructure to exploit space? Mr. Collins seems to think that a "commercially efficient transportation system" will not exist until the post-shuttle era. In fact it has existed ever since NASA began launching commercial satellites, twenty years ago.

Mr. Collins also asserts that the space

shuttle is "too expensive and complex for private enterprise to either develop or operate." Yet a company has been trying to buy two shuttles from NASA for the past two years, and NASA Administrator James Beggs has publicly indicated his desire to turn the shuttles over to the private sector by the end of the decade.

As for Mr. Collins's suggestion that companies will for some reason shun investments in space if the government owns the only means of transportation, that barrier has certainly not prevented the development of a \$3 billion-a-year commercial-satellite business. Taking Mr. Collins's logic further, one would expect business to shun publicly owned highways and railroads. Obviously that has happened neither here in the United States nor in Europe and Japan, where railroads are generally government-owned. In fact, given the rather sorry history of American railroads—from the monopoly pricing of the robber barons to the disinvestment of recent decades—one could make a strong case that government-owned railroads would have been a boon to American business. The "historical precedents" prove, it seems to me, that often industry will invest only when the government takes the initial risk of financing or developing an infrastructure. To leave such development to the private sector is often to ensure that it will never happen.

Sadly, however, the Reagan Administration shares Mr. Collins's views, and NASA is already trying to turn over as much as possible of its infrastructure to business. As I pointed out in my article, this ideological impulse is wreaking havoc in two significant industries—remote sensing and expendable launch vehicles. I fear that if we as a nation continue to be obsessed with turning every government function over to the private sector, we will one day wake up to realize that the French and Germans and Japanese—who do not share our obsession—have crossed the new frontier before us.

WHEN FOREIGN AID FAILS

While Jack Shepherd's article "When Foreign Aid Fails" (April *Atlantic*) was reasonably accurate, some important assertions were not. It is not true that the World Bank stresses cash-crop over food-crop production in sub-Saharan Africa. In the ten-year period

1974–1984 the World Bank and its affiliate, the International Development Association (IDA), provided about \$5 billion for agricultural development in sub-Saharan Africa. Some 60 to 70 percent of this assistance was for food-crop production, livestock, and fisheries to increase domestic consumption. In some countries it is difficult to make such clear distinctions. For example, in Senegal peanuts are produced for export as well as consumed domestically. In the Sudan's large irrigation schemes food staples are intercropped with the main export commodity—cotton. Experience shows that increased exports are needed to finance the import of critical items such as fertilizer, pesticides, and machinery needed for food, as well as cash-crop production. Foreign-exchange scarcity, which is largely the result of declining crop exports, can choke off food production as well, and examples of this are common in sub-Saharan Africa.

In sum, it is simplistic to pose a food-versus cash-crop dichotomy in Africa. The task instead is to analyze the total agricultural picture and try to improve it by helping to increase production in areas where the need is great and the advantage large. This is what the World Bank tries to do.

To claim that the World Bank's analysis of the African problem is in conflict with the African governments' analysis is misleading. Mr. Shepherd fails to mention the World Bank's report of September, 1984, "Toward Sustained Development in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Joint Program of Action," which, while acknowledging the bleak situation in Africa, emphasizes pragmatic solutions and hope. It emphasizes the need for economic-policy reform—to eliminate price distortions, to direct investment funds to the most productive uses, to promote exports. Drafts of the document were discussed extensively with African leaders and representatives of all the Pan-African organizations, who generally agreed with the report's diagnosis and recommendations. A growing number of African nations are undertaking economic-reform programs along these lines.

The World Bank has assisted economic development in sub-Saharan Africa for some twenty-five years. There have been many successes and there have been some mistakes, and we believe we have learned from both. We also believe that while sub-Saharan Africa faces acute economic difficulties, the tide can

be turned and a brighter future can be realized through the will and determination of the African nations themselves, with the assistance of the international community.

THOMAS A. BLINKHORN
Chief, Public Affairs
The World Bank
Washington, D.C.

Jack Shepherd very ably describes how humane and nobly conceived efforts can be counterproductive. What is not said is that even if every penny of the aid had been used to produce the most effective and beneficial results, it would have been of only ephemeral benefit to the people of Africa.

Several times the article refers to the problem of population growth, but Mr. Shepherd must not recognize it as a terminal disease. Every African who avoids starvation today means a greater number of Africans to die of starvation in the future.

W. THAD ROWLAND, JR.
Upper Montclair, N.J.

Jack Shepherd replies:

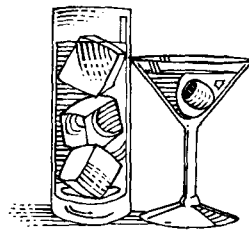
Mr. Blinkhorn has not read my article carefully. It may be, as he states, "simplistic" to pose a food-crop versus cash-crop "dichotomy" in sub-Saharan Africa, but that is exactly what the World Bank (and other donors) have done. Both the 1981 Berg Report and the 1984 World Bank study "Toward Sustained Development" analyze the causes of Africa's declining food production and take positions on the issue of cash-crop production over food-crop production. This position is still being debated at the Bank, by other donors, and especially among the Africans.

The hard question is, Should an African nation raise cash crops and use the foreign exchange so earned to purchase food, or should it raise food and become self-sufficient, but with a resulting decrease in foreign exchange and imported commodities, including (especially) agricultural inputs like fertilizers, pesticides, and machinery? This is hardly a "simplistic" issue.

Second, I cite the 1984 World Bank report "Toward Sustained Development" on page 43, and repeatedly thereafter. This document, with the Berg Report, forms the basis for discussion of the donor perspective in my article.

The issue is not as neat and clean as Mr. Rowland might wish. Where is the

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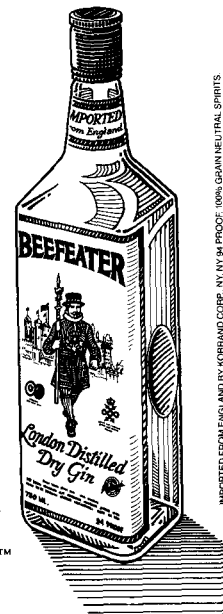


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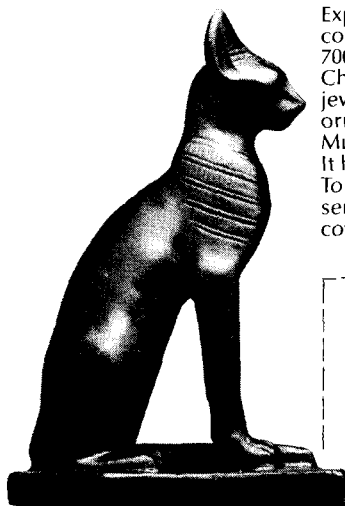
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moral high ground in offering food only to people who agree with our ideas or policies? There are strong arguments that population growth rates in Africa will level not with draconian measures but simply with the end of poverty.

TWELVE-TONE TECHNIQUE

It was heartening to find a composer of our own time treated at length in Annalyn Swan's article on Peter Maxwell Davies ("A Visionary Composer," March *Atlantic*). Unfortunately, the information Swan gives on twentieth-century music is at times distorted and misleading.

As a composer, I was particularly disturbed to read the statement that "most modern composers build their music on standard twelve-tone rows or series, in which all twelve notes in an octave are put in a randomly ordered sequence. . . ." Many modern composers do write twelve-tone music, but at least as many—many more, I would wager—do not. The twelve-tone tradition is an important part of twentieth-century music, but it is by no means the whole story, and Davies is by no means the only composer to explore other sources of material.

Furthermore, Swan misunderstands twelve-tone technique. It is certainly possible to use a twelve-tone row that is randomly ordered, and I am sure it has been done, perhaps with good results. In general, however, twelve-tone rows are carefully and deliberately ordered, so as to achieve particular musical results. There are composers who are interested in the introduction of random elements in musical composition, but this is not the basis of twelve-tone technique.

ANNE SCHWARZ
Poquott, N.Y.

Annalyn Swan replies:

Of all the musical developments of the past half century, none has been more important than the use of the tone row. It matters less whether "many" or "most" composers write in this style (which could be argued until the cows come home) than that its influence since the Second World War has been pervasive; even those who don't write twelve-tone music often define themselves in opposition to it. I did not say in my piece that twelve-tone technique was the "whole story" of modern music, as Ms. Schwarz suggests, or that Peter Maxwell

Davies is the sole person to resist it.

In using the phrase "randomly ordered" to describe tone rows, I did not mean to suggest the use of aleatory, or chance, procedures. I simply meant that the tone rows are ordered in any way a composer chooses, not according to an established sequence. The results sound random, for they lack the obvious key relationships of traditional diatonic harmony—in which, for example, a G will always be the dominant in the key of C, thus orienting the listener. I tried to define a complex musical method in a phrase. I'm sorry if there was any misunderstanding.

SATELLITE TELEVISION

David Owen ("Satellite Television," June *Atlantic*) may know all about earth stations and getting plastered in Vista, California, but apparently neither he nor anyone on the *Atlantic* editorial staff is a boxing aficionado.

The "thrillah in Manila" did not feature Muhammad Ali and George Frazier. Joe Frazier was Ali's opponent.

JAMES L. ROSENBERG
Pittsburgh, Pa.

David Owen replies:

Mr. Rosenberg is, of course, correct.

ADVICE & CONSENT

I enjoyed Peter Hellman's article on the Merkava tank ("Israel's Chariot of Fire," March *Atlantic*), but I must protest one glaring error. Mr. Hellman wrote of Egyptian soldiers kicking off their boots to run away faster. That is a terrible insult. Arab soldiers will remove their boots in a battle for the same reason that they remove their shoes before entering a mosque—they must be barefoot when they go before Allah.

I recently served in Sinai as a United Nations military observer. I explored the Sinai for six months and saw most of the battle sites. I saw boots strewn on the desert from El Arish to Kantara and on the flint-covered limestone plains from El Nakhl to the Mitla Pass. Every one was a sad monument to a soldier preparing to die. To trivialize this by accusing the Egyptian soldiers of cowardice is tragic.

CAPTAIN ROSS L. JOHNSON
*Canadian Contingent,
United Nations Middle East*

Daniel Czitrom and David Marc ("The Elements of Lifestyle," May *Atlantic*) may be interested to know that the term "life-styles" almost certainly entered the language of the Hong Kong treaty as a direct translation from the Mandarin Chinese "*sheng-huo fang-shi*." This venerable term, often translated as "way of life" rather than "life-style," is very commonly used in Chinese-language discussions concerning problems of reunification: China-Hong Kong, China-Taiwan. Though its use in this recent treaty stimulated a very entertaining reflection on cultural linguistics, I don't think we can point to the 1960s as the etymological culprit this time.

DEBORAH A. BRAUTIGAM
Cambridge, Mass.

Perhaps you will permit a few comments from another Scot regarding Alexander Cockburn's "The Origin of the Kilt" (January *Atlantic*).

Kilt, as Mr. Cockburn correctly points out, is a foreign word. It was introduced in the eighteenth century and derived from *quilt*. The Gaelic is *feileadh*, which was probably first used by the Irish to refer to the male fashion of dress of the Romans. The upper portion of the body was clothed in a *léine* (shirt) over which was worn a *brat*, or shoulder plaid. The earliest Gaelic description of Scots wearing this apparel is by O'Cleirigh, in 1594: "Their exterior dress was mottled cloaks of many colours with a fringe to their shins and calves; their belts were over their loins outside their cloaks." This *feileadh mór* (big kilt) evolved as described by Mr. Cockburn into the modern waist-supported, pleated *feileadh beag* (little kilt). The fact that this modern kilt may have been invented by an English Quaker does not invalidate the authenticity of the dress. One would not argue that the English language was bogus merely because 50 percent of it was derived from French and Latin.

The word *tartan* derives from the French *tartaine*, which originally defined a type of cloth, not its color or pattern, and which became the English synonym for the Gaelic *breacan*, meaning multi-colored cloth. Martin Martin clearly describes circa 1700 the wearing of *am breacan* in the Outer Hebrides: "The plaid worn only by the men . . . consists of diverse colours." It seems, however, that the tartans were used to distinguish the inhabitants of different districts and not the members of different families, as

at present. Martin's comments, it should be noted, were not hearsay; he was born in Skye and reared in the Highlands.

Every Northern European nation had its own sausage, and Scotland, with its haggis (possibly derived from French, *le hachis*), is no exception. "Minced sheep's guts" were never, to my knowledge, an ingredient of haggis. Traditionally the haggis (mostly oatmeal) was cooked in a sheep's stomach, although today it is encased in plastic. Other Europeans still wrap their lesser breeds of sausage in pigs' small intestines.

Hogmanay (New Year's Eve) and Neerday (New Year's Day) became especially popular in Scotland after the Presbyterian Church abolished the "frivolous and irrelevant" Christmas holiday. (Good will toward men, and spending money on presents, especially those that will give only temporary pleasure, are not associated in Scottish minds with a holiday!) Certainly there was at times a lot of debauchery at the New Year, but there was something else, which Mr. Cockburn omitted. Hogmanay had many of the qualities of the Jewish Day of Atonement, with family members gathering together for a spiritual renewal and making resolutions for the New Year. I recall that in my own home, in Glasgow, neither food nor drink was taken on Hogmanay, and the whole celebration was teetotal, as it was in many Highland and Lowland homes.

Hogmanay was not a joyous party and, indeed, was often a very sad time for the bereaved (an English word clearly lacking in authenticity, as it was derived from *reivers* [or *reavers*], Scottish border raiders who were liable to leave one in this state after a visit).

Finally, I am afraid, Mr. Cockburn misquotes the national bard. The statement comes from a letter by Burns dated April, 1796, and refers to his terminal illness (probably bacterial endocarditis—an infection of valves of the heart). The true meaning becomes apparent with the full text:

I have only known existence by the pressure of the heavy hand of Sickness; and have counted time by the repercussions of PAIN! Rheumatis, Cold, and Fever have formed, to me a terrible Trinity in Unity, which makes me close my eyes in misery, and open them without hope.

W. WATSON BUCHANAN, M.D.
Hamilton, Ontario

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REPORTS & COMMENT

NUTRITION

SWEETNESS AND HEALTH

No link between sugar and disease has ever been substantiated. What's more, sugar substitutes, while low in calories, may actually stimulate the appetite

THESE DAYS, TAKING candy from a baby is a moral imperative. Sweets are no longer for the sweet but rather for those so undisciplined or unhip that they will sacrifice figure, self-respect, and well-being for a few moments of oral gratification. Consumer advocates warn of sugar's insidious inclusion in everything from canned peas to granola bars. Some school administrators have banned sugary "junk foods" from their cafeterias. The United States surgeon general, the Department of Agriculture, and the Department of Health and Human Services all have urged Americans to eat less sugar. The current rate of consumption averages roughly one and a quarter pounds a week per person.

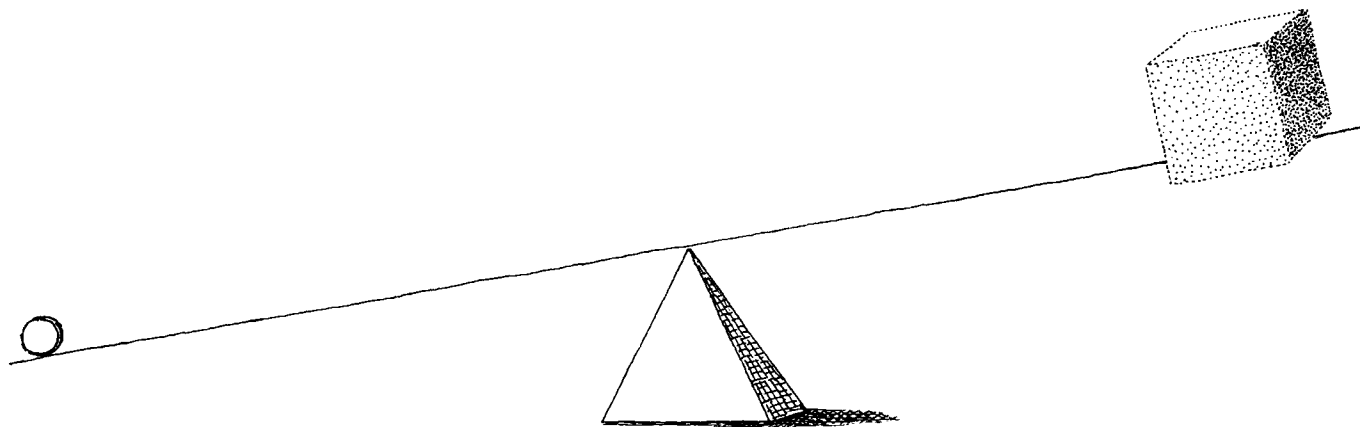
Sugar has been described as contrib-

uting to acne, obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and cancer. More recently it has been said to provoke a number of behavioral disorders, ranging from mild hyperactivity to outright criminality. The lack of scientific confirmation for these contentions does not seem to have diminished their persuasiveness. Acting on the notion that the real thing is fattening or harmful or both, more and more people are turning to sugar substitutes. Last year 3,943 tons of saccharin were used—the equivalent in sweetening power of more than a million tons of sugar. Saccharin's rival for the market in artificial sweeteners is aspartame, the product known as Equal in its tabletop form and as NutraSweet when used by food manufacturers to sweeten processed foods and beverages. Made by the pharmaceutical manufacturer G. D. Searle & Co., aspartame has enjoyed overwhelming consumer acceptance since its approval by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in 1981. It is estimated that 50 million Americans consume aspartame regularly and another 100 million have tried it. Last year 3,431 tons of aspartame, or the equivalent of more than 686,000 tons of sugar, were brought to market. The total amount of refined su-

gar brought to market was 7.8 million tons, and of corn syrup, 6.6 million tons.

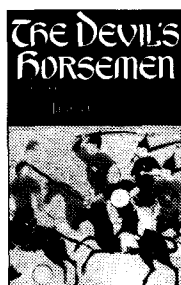
Paradoxically, the success of artificial sweeteners has not diminished demand for natural ones. On the contrary, per capita consumption of conventional sweeteners is on the rise, having increased from about 109 pounds per year in 1960 (before the widespread introduction of artificial sweeteners) to about 126.8 pounds in 1984. The use of refined sugar, or sucrose, has dropped to about sixty-seven pounds a year from a high of about a hundred pounds a year in the mid-1970s, but this is more than made up for by the growing popularity of corn syrup, a sometimes less expensive sweetener high in fruit sugar, or fructose, which is replacing sucrose in soft drinks, baked goods, candy, ice cream, and other processed foods.

It would seem, then, that for most people artificial sweeteners are not an alternative to sugar and corn syrup but an adjunct of them. As such, the usefulness of artificial sweeteners for weight control is questionable. Yet, in a survey conducted in 1984 by the Calorie Control Council, an international organization representing sixty manufacturers and suppliers of dietetic foods and beverages, 51



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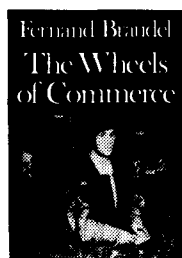
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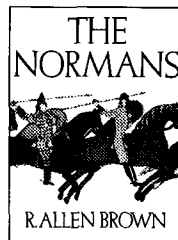
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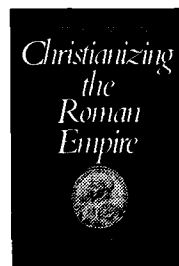
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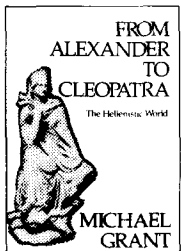
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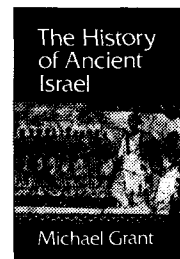
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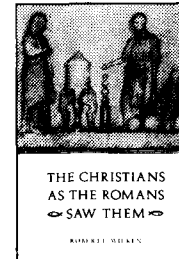
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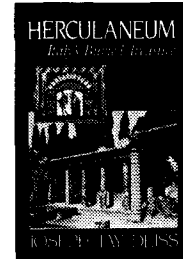
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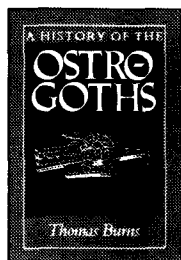
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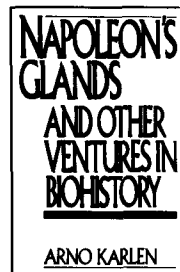
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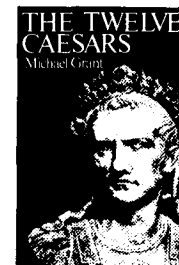
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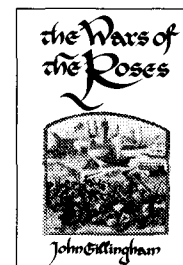
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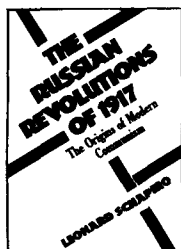
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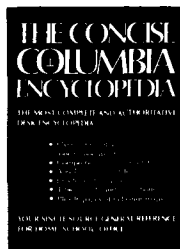
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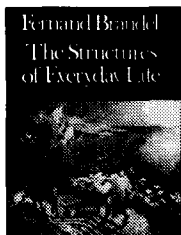
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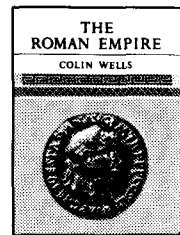
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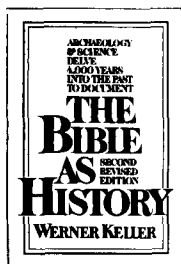
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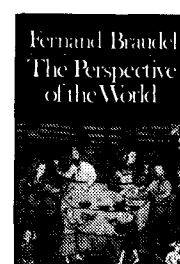
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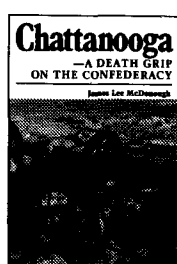
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percent of people using artificial sweeteners said that they did so to maintain an attractive appearance. Russell Lemieux, a spokesman for the council, is quick to say that these consumer impressions are merely that. "There have never been scientific studies that show that the use of artificial sweeteners leads to weight reduction," he says. "The only way these products can help is if you eat wisely"—that is, if you use them instead of, rather than in addition to, other foods. The statistics on consumption of sugar and artificial sweeteners cited above suggest that many people are using diet sodas to wash down their candy bars.

IS IT SAFE TO CONSUME artificial sweeteners? The safety of saccharin—a calorie-free substance with 300 times the sweetening power of sugar—has been in question since shortly after its discovery, in the late nineteenth century. Harvey Washington Wiley, the chief of the Bureau of Chemistry in the Department of Agriculture from 1883 to 1912, asked in 1908 for a ban on the use of saccharin in foods under the authority of the Pure Food and Drugs Act of 1906. President Theodore Roosevelt, who used saccharin in a futile attempt to diminish his girth, objected, and the ban was set aside. In 1912 the government decided that saccharin could be used in products intended for invalids but not in products for healthy people. Despite the government's restriction, Monsanto Chemical Works, of St. Louis, then the country's largest producer of saccharin, continued to make and sell the sweetener for general use. The government brought charges against the company in 1916, but the case was struck from the docket in 1925, because it had become clear that no jury in St. Louis would convict Monsanto of wrongdoing. In 1958 the Food and Drug Administration included saccharin on its famous GRAS ("generally recognized as safe") list. Through the years saccharin was never absent from the shelves.

The first convincing evidence that saccharin poses a risk to health came in the 1970s, when studies undertaken here and in Canada showed that rats that had ingested a large quantity of the sweetener developed bladder cancer at a higher than normal rate. In 1977, as a result of this finding, the FDA announced its intention to ban saccharin under the Delaney clause of the Food, Drug, and Cosmetics Act, which prohibits the sale of any food additive shown to cause can-

cer in test animals or human beings. The public outcry against this decision was loud. Consumers had had to give up cyclamates, an alternative to saccharin, in 1970, when the FDA had banned the substance as a possible carcinogen. They were horrified at the prospect of having no low-calorie sweetener whatsoever. Congress quickly responded to the protest by declaring a moratorium on the ban and requiring only that saccharin and foods containing it carry warning labels. It has renewed the moratorium every two years since.

Aspartame, the latest FDA-approved contender in the sweetness sweepstakes, contains as many calories by weight as sugar but is 180 times sweeter. Although Searle's contention that aspartame tastes "nearly identical" to sugar is not universally accepted, the product does lack the metallic aftertaste of saccharin, and therefore many consumers prefer it. Already aspartame is being used to sweeten more than seventy products, including cereal, desserts, drink mixes, and chewing gum, many of which are clearly aimed at children.

Aspartame is composed of aspartic acid and phenylalanine, amino acids that occur naturally in many foods—in large amounts in meat, milk, and eggs. Although Searle has made much of the fact that the components of aspartame are found in protein, the claim is somewhat misleading. Although the aspartic acid and phenylalanine in aspartame have natural analogues, aspartame itself is far from a natural construct. Ordinarily, aspartic acid and phenylalanine combine with as many as eighteen other amino acids to form proteins. Because aspartame consists of only aspartic acid and phenylalanine, it delivers these amino acids in a much more concentrated form than a person would normally consume.

About one out of every sixty people carries a gene that makes phenylalanine somewhat difficult to metabolize. People with two such genes have a disease called phenylketonuria, or PKU, a rare disorder that can very quickly result in retardation if the victim consumes more than carefully controlled amounts of phenylalanine. People with PKU must avoid natural sources of protein. Aspartame is also off-limits to this group, and the labels of products that contain it are required by law to bear warnings.

Searle says in its promotional literature that "the entire family can enjoy products made with NutraSweet," although it does caution parents of chil-

dren with PKU or with one PKU gene to "consult their physicians or dieticians" before using the sweetener. Searle does not mention that screening for a single PKU gene is not at all routine or that very few of the country's four million PKU carriers have been identified as such. Seymour Kaufman, a biochemist at the National Institutes of Mental Health, fears that pregnant PKU carriers could endanger their unborn children by consuming aspartame. "There's a bad misconception that aspartame is the same thing as protein," he says. "The trouble is that the taking of aspartame is not at all to be equated with the eating of protein. Phenylketonuria is believed to be the result of an imbalance of amino acids, and this can be mimicked when we take aspartame. It cannot be mimicked by eating meat."

According to Neil Holtzman, the chairman of the Committee on Genetics of the American Academy of Pediatrics, fetuses and children under the age of six would be especially vulnerable to these effects, because their brains are still forming. In 1980, when the FDA established a board of inquiry to judge the safety of aspartame, Searle estimated that the average consumer would ingest no more than ten milligrams a day per kilogram of body weight. But in hearings on the sweetener held by Congress earlier this year an attorney for the FDA said that consumption is hovering at around 30 milligrams per kilogram on average and that many people are exceeding 50 milligrams per kilogram—the maximum that the FDA considers safe. "The fact that television commercials encourage people to eat aspartame straight really drops the bottom out of the issue," Holtzman says.

Last year the national Centers for Disease Control reviewed more than 500 reports of such symptoms as headache, dizziness, and mood changes out of roughly 600 that had been filed by people who associated these symptoms with their consumption of aspartame. The centers concluded that a systematic clinical study of these people would be necessary to determine whether or not their complaints could be linked directly to aspartame. According to James Greene, a spokesman for the FDA, such a study is under way at Duke University, with funding from Searle.

WHETHER OR NOT either aspartame or saccharin poses a threat to health is unclear, but both sweeteners

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are at best controversial. Nonetheless, many consumers choose these products, in order to avoid what they believe are the established dangers of refined sugar. Since the introduction of aspartame, which many consider to be the first really palatable artificial sweetener, manufacturers have appealed to this anti-sugar sentiment by advertising artificially sweetened products as a healthful alternative.

Exactly when and where sugar dread originated is not known, but many nutritionists say that it was stimulated, if not created, by the dental profession. Cavities are the one negative side effect of sugar consumption that hardly anyone disputes. They are no small problem, costing Americans billions of dollars in dental bills each year. But milk and fruit, which contain natural sugars, can easily do as much damage to teeth as, say, soft drinks, which are the largest single source of refined sugar in the American diet. In fact, sticky foods like figs and raisins can do far more damage, if left to ferment on the teeth. Many unprocessed foods contain surprisingly high amounts of sugar. Five figs contain seventeen teaspoons of sugar—more than fourteen fig cookies do. A quarter of a cup of raisins has more than six teaspoons of sugar, and a banana nearly five teaspoons—almost twice as much as a Mr. Goodbar. For children the greatest single source of sugar is not candy, cake, or even soft drinks but milk. This is why pediatricians say not to put infants to bed with a bottle; teeth quickly rot if allowed to soak in a bath of milk sugar. Although both natural and refined sugars are excellent sources of food for the bacteria that attack the teeth, no consumer group has argued that warnings to this effect be placed on milk jugs or boxes of raisins.

Another popular criticism of sugar—the one most frequently made by the federal agencies that have advocated a reduction of its use—is that it is nothing but empty calories. This is misleading, because the phrase “empty calories” is a contradiction in terms. Refined sugar does not contain any protein, vitamins, minerals, fats, or fiber; it is pure carbohydrate. But as such it is used by the body as a source of fuel. This is not to suggest that a diet of soft drinks, most of which consist chiefly of sugar and water, is healthful. Sugar, like any other food, can be abused.

Consumers say they worry less about the sugar in products that are necessarily

sweet, like soft drinks, than they do about the sugar concealed in purportedly healthful foods, like bread, peanut butter, and cereal. Manufacturers have recently capitalized on these fears by selling “low-sugar” alternatives to their own or other sugar-tainted products, often charging premium prices for the favor. But a careful look at the labels of even the most heavily sugared cereals reveals that they are not necessarily an important source of sugar. Although these cereals are as much as half sugar by weight, this amounts to only about a tablespoon of sugar per serving—no more than many people sprinkle on their unsweetened cornflakes or Shredded



Wheat every morning. And the sugar does not detract from the nutritive value of the grain any more than the natural sugar in an apple or a banana diminishes the nutritional value of the fruit. Says one pediatrician, “The point is to get kids to eat breakfast, not to worry too much about what exactly it is they eat.”

Links between sugar and acne, diabetes, heart disease, cancer, and general decrepitude have never been substantiated. The authority who is quoted most often in support of such claims is John Yudkin, a doctor and a professor emeritus of nutrition at London University. In his book *Sweet and Dangerous*, which was published in 1972, Yudkin talks about sugar as if it were the universal usurper of humankind’s vital sap—a poison. Yudkin’s best-known research is a series of

“intervention” studies—involving patients on low-sugar diets—that purport to show a correlation between heart disease and sugar consumption. But strenuous efforts by many researchers to duplicate Yudkin’s results failed, and most scientists have dismissed his work on heart disease.

Not surprisingly, however, Yudkin’s work has found favor in several quarters. In the introduction to his book, Yudkin thanks the “many firms in the food and pharmaceutical industries” for their support. Those who have backed his ongoing research include the manufacturers of cyclamates and England’s National Dairy Council. By the time Yudkin’s book was published, cyclamates had been banned in England as well as the United States. The reason why the cyclamates industry was interested in Yudkin’s work is obvious, particularly in view of the author’s stated opinion that cyclamates are “perfectly safe to use . . . whenever you wish.” The Dairy Council’s interest is equally clear. The connection between the incidence of heart disease and the consumption of saturated fat had been well established for years and did nothing to enhance the appeal of dairy foods; Yudkin was working hard to reverse scientific opinion on the matter. In his book he says, “There is a sizeable minority, of which I am one, that believes that coronary disease is not largely due to fat in the diet.” At a meeting of the International Dairy Federation in 1973 he boasted that his research on sugar would soon “free butterfat from guilt.”

Yudkin’s views to the contrary, a firm link between sugar and heart disease has not been demonstrated. Nor have researchers established a link between sugar consumption and the incidence of diabetes. The epidemiological evidence that caused scientists to suspect the existence of such a correlation was drawn mainly from observations of immigrant populations: when groups moved from underdeveloped to developed countries, their consumption of sugar—and their incidence of diabetes—increased. But their consumption of many other foods also increased, as did their tendency toward obesity. Obesity and genetic propensity, not sugar intake, are now thought to be the important variables in adult-onset diabetes, the more common form of the disease. In fact, sucrose is no longer considered strictly off-limits to diabetics. Research over the past decade has shown that some carbohydrate-rich foods—potatoes, for example—raise the level of blood sugar, or glucose, far faster than some previously taboo su-

crose-rich foods, including ice cream. According to Phyllis Crapo, an expert on diabetes who teaches nutrition at the University of California at San Diego. "For some time the lore has been that sucrose caused a rapid rise in blood sugar. But the response to sucrose isn't that large. Bread and potatoes, for example, cause a larger response. They're made up of starch, which consists of several glucose molecules bonded together. When these starch molecules are digested, the body reacts to them as it does to pure glucose." Sucrose is broken down by the body into equal portions of glucose and fructose. Fructose has only a minor effect on blood-sugar levels.

A literature review conducted from 1972 to 1976 by the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology concluded that "there is no clear evidence in the available information on sucrose that demonstrates a hazard to the public when used at levels that are now current and in the manner now practiced." A committee formed in 1979 by the American Society for Clinical Nutrition concluded that dental caries constituted the only health hazard that could be associated with sugar. Many epidemiological studies confirm these conclusions. One of the most recent of these was done by Nevin S. Scrimshaw, an Institute Professor and a former head of the Department of Nutrition and Food Science at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Scrimshaw found that the cardiovascular health of a group of Costa Ricans, who get 40 percent of their calories from crude brown sugar, was on average the same as that of residents of Guatemala, who eat much less sugar and get most of their calories from ground corn. The Costa Ricans had a higher incidence of tooth decay than the Guatemalans did, however.

Recently sugar has been implicated in behavioral problems. Reports from parents and teachers that children seemed to become less controlled and more irritable after eating sweets led several research groups to investigate. At a meeting on diet and behavior organized by the American Medical Association, the International Life Sciences Institute, and the Nutrition Foundation, and held in Arlington, Virginia, last November, these groups announced that they had found no conclusive evidence to support a cause-and-effect relationship between sugar intake and behavioral disturbances. In fact, many of the children who were given sugar during the studies

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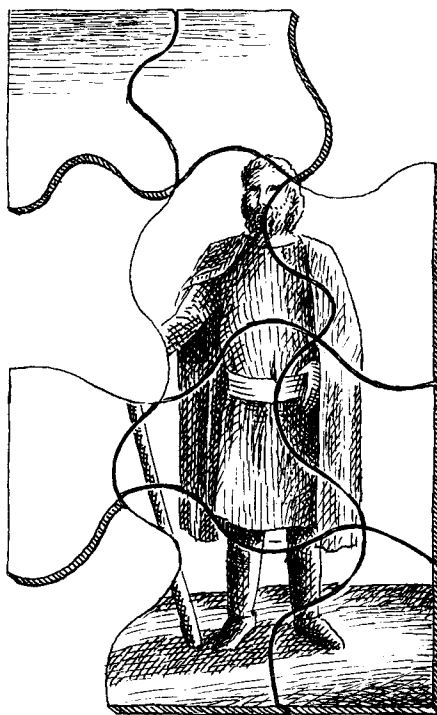
were more passive and sleepy than their control-group counterparts who were given aspartame or saccharin. This response has been explained by the fact that sugar, like all carbohydrates, encourages the brain's production of serotonin, which is known to induce a calm feeling in human beings.

SUGAR IS NOT, as many health-food promoters would have it, an acquired taste pushed on modern man by industry. Infants show a predilection for it at birth. Scientists speculate that this inbred preference for sweetness over other tastes is the result of natural selection: plants with a sweet taste tend to be healthful sources of calories, while bitter ones are usually unripe or poisonous or both. Although the taste buds may be fooled by artificial sweeteners, there is evidence that the rest of the body is not. Unlike sugar, which produces a feeling of satiety, noncaloric sweeteners do nothing to ease the appetite and may in fact encourage a craving for sweets by turning on sweet sensors on the tongue without putting sugar into the bloodstream. Worse yet, people who use artificial sweeteners may compensate by eating more fats. A study by Dr. Katherine Porikos, of St. Luke's-Roosevelt Hospital Center, in New York City, found that when aspartame was substituted for sugar, fat intake increased—hardly a healthful side-effect.

Research suggests that controlling weight has far more to do with curtailing fat than with curtailing sugar and that obese people are more likely to have a "fat tooth" than a sweet one. Rena Wing, an assistant professor of psychiatry and epidemiology at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine and a specialist in weight control, says, "The facts are simple: fats have more than twice as many calories as carbohydrates, and it is fat that contributes to weight problems." Many foods that people identify as sweet, such as ice cream, chocolate, pie, and doughnuts, are actually high-fat foods flavored with sugar. "Let's face it," Wing says. "No one gets fat from Life Savers, which derive virtually all their calories from sugar. What we really need is a fat substitute, not a sugar substitute."

—Ellen Ruppel Shell

Ellen Ruppel Shell has written about science for a number of publications. Last year she was a Vannevar Bush Fellow in science writing at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.



ENGLAND

THE BUTSER EXPERIMENT

Second thoughts about the Iron Age and the rubbish heaps of history

THERE IS A stretch of highway over the chalk downs of Hampshire, a few miles south of Petersfield, where the road arcs gently down and east and then curls steeply up to the west. Snug in the dell, at the base of Butser Hill, is a farmstead.

It lies in a part of Britain that is known to have been settled and farmed intensively for at least three thousand years. Because the soil cover is so thin, excavations on the downs frequently uncover long, narrow furrows in the underlying chalk—etched by wooden ards, ancestors of the modern plow, as they scored the ancient ground. Here and there the contours of prehistoric fields are suggested still by lynchets—the banks formed by erosion on the lower edges of sloping plots. When the sun is low, the patterns of Celtic tillage are limned in sharp relief. Barrows dot the downland landscape, sheltering the remains of men whose fields these may have been.

Such folk might well have occupied manors like the one at Butser Hill. Erase the electric-power lines strung above the

site, erase the A3 motorway, and what remains is a landscape as it could have looked around the year 300 B.C.—at the heart, chronologically, of Britain's Iron Age. Amid five acres of paddocks, pens, and fields stands a sturdy roundhouse, more than forty feet in diameter and thirty feet high, its basketwork walls plastered with daub. The thatched, conical roof, where swallows nest, protects ovens and querns and crockery. Immediately outside are several haystacks and a byre. A low bank and a shallow dike enclose the central compound. Beyond lie fields of wheat, barley, beans, and flax. In outlying pastures livestock graze—unusual breeds of sheep and cattle, gamy and hirsute.

Elsewhere on the farm are hives, kilns, vineyards, and a shop for working metal. Great mounds of earth-covered timbers—charcoal clamps—await firing, to produce fuel for the forge. There are terraced beds thick with herbs: woad and meadowsweet, cowslip and eyebright, elder, valerian, dog's mercury, field pennycress, and a hundred species more.

This tract is the demonstration area of Butser Ancient Farm. It is not a theme park or a tourist trap, and the men and women who labor here do not wear bearskins and pose for pictures. The demonstration area is, rather, the public side of a serious experiment that archaeologists have been conducting for more than a decade and will continue to conduct for at least a decade more. The aim of the experiment is simple: to take what scholars have inferred over the years about Iron Age agriculture—about its economics and techniques—and put those inferences to the test by actually creating and operating an Iron Age farm. An implement that museums label "primitive sickle": is it capable, in fact, of mowing wheat? Does the "grain dryer" dry grain? Are "rubbish pits" really rubbish pits? More broadly, how did the Iron Age farmer prepare his soil, manage his livestock, build his house? How efficient was his technology? And just how productive might one of his farms have been?

These are the kinds of questions that Peter J. Reynolds, the director of the Butser Ancient Farm Research Project Trust, has been asking himself since the Butser experiment got under way, in 1972. Some of the answers that he and his colleagues have arrived at are challenging conventional views of Iron Age man and society.

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ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I SPENT SEVERAL days with Peter Reynolds last fall, visiting both the demonstration area, which is open to the public, and the research farm itself, high above on Butser Hill, which is ordinarily off-limits to all but project staff. Reynolds is tall and trim, with a dark beard and moustache. He holds a degree in classics from Trinity College, Dublin, and has been pursuing experimental archaeology, as his craft is called, for some twenty years. Experimental archaeology is one manifestation of the so-called new archaeology that emerged during the 1960s—an archaeology focused more on understanding cultural processes and systems than on establishing cultural chronology. The work is not sedentary. When I first met Reynolds, in his office, he had just returned from the research farm “up top.” His jeans were soiled and his heavy boots were caked with mud.

“We have been trying to confine ourselves to the basics, making sure the bricks are sound before the edifice is built,” Reynolds said. “In terms of farming, we want to find out what actually happens if we do A or B or C. The very process of putting an Iron Age farm together raises vexing questions. We are dealing with many elements—physical structures, fields, livestock—which in turn comprise many subsystems. All of these various systems are interacting, one with another. To keep animals you need fences, and for fences you need hazel rods, and for hazel rods you must coppice woodland so that the stalks grow straight and tall from the stumps. Our aim is to create an integrated system, one that we can actually see in operation.”

“Our starting point,” Reynolds continued, “is almost always the material evidence uncovered by excavation—a pattern of post holes, a charred pit, some carbonized seeds. Some implements have been preserved in bogs, but generally the Iron Age doesn’t offer very much. We also make use, cautiously, of comparative ethnology, looking at how primitive societies today may have solved a problem that is troubling us. To some degree, what we are engaged in is not only working forward from the evidence but, by experiment, working backward to the evidence, trying to establish what the physical record, after the passage of many years, is supposed to look like. In other words, what kinds of human behavior in the past left behind the kinds of remains we have found?”

“The whole point of experimental archaeology is to subject theory to scientific scrutiny and when an interpretation is found wanting, to develop alternative hypotheses and put them to the test. In no sense are we play-acting. The research farm and the demonstration area are vast, open-air laboratories. We have nine fields under the plow and we take 60,000 measurements of various kinds on each one of them every year. Our photographic collection now exceeds 12,000 slides. We analyze our quantitative data with computers. The power lines that run across the demonstration area are in a way appropriate, because they remind us that far from pretending to be Iron Age people, which we could never do successfully, we are twentieth-century scientists using every ounce of microchip technology.”

Reynolds’s office occupies a corner of what was formerly a Little Chef restaurant, part of a British fast-food chain. It is cluttered with computer printouts, offprints of journal articles, stalks of wheat, samples of Celtic beans. A photograph of a ditch in cross section shows the layers of silt that build up before the banks can be stabilized by vegetation. Shelves covering two walls hold books like Elsdon Best’s *Stone Implements of the Maori*, M. C. Ryder’s *Sheep and Man*, and Charles Darwin’s *Vegetable Mould and Earthworms* (Reynolds is interested in earthworms because, as he has written, “certain varieties . . . can effectively invert the soil cover,” thereby displacing potsherds and other artifacts). Near the door a makeshift calendar traces the schedule of farm activities during the coming year. The rest of the building, where lunch counters used to be, is part warehouse, part laboratory, part classroom, and part museum. Reynolds takes in as many as ten university students during the summer. Their fees, together with receipts from the demonstration area (admission is ninety pence for adults, fifty pence for children) and modest subventions from private foundations, support the Butser experiment and pay the salaries of three full-time professional staff members.

CREATING THE research farm, Reynolds explained, had been an enormous exercise in both addition and subtraction—addition of much that time had subtracted and subtraction of much it had added. To begin with, Reynolds needed a site that was free of contamination by artificial pesticides, herbicides,

and fertilizers. One of the spurs radiating from Butser Hill, known as Little Butser, met that criterion, and Reynolds was able to persuade local farmers not to spray their crops when the wind was blowing toward it. Little Butser possessed an additional advantage: it is marginal land, 800 feet above sea level, with a soil cover less than half a foot deep on a base of hard chalk. These adverse conditions guaranteed that the farm’s performance would not be enhanced by accidents of environment.

Farm buildings had to be erected. The first of these, completed in 1973, was based on a pattern of post holes brought to light by Sir Mortimer Wheeler during his excavations at Maiden Castle, in Dorset, in the 1930s. Reconstruction proceeded by trial and error, with a few crucial hints, by way of descriptions, from Pytheas and Tacitus. The finished structure, known as the Maiden Castle house, represents only one possible interpretation of the archaeological record. And in any number of ways—some of them to be exposed, perhaps, by the passage of time—the reconstruction may be flawed. Experimental archaeologists deal not in certainties but in probabilities.

Before planting his fields Reynolds needed livestock, both for traction and for manure. Because many Iron Age species, such as Celtic shorthorn cattle, are extinct, and others, such as Old English goats, are nearly so, Reynolds had to search for close approximations—substituting Exmoor ponies, say, for the horses of Iron Age times, or mating wild boars and Tamworth pigs in an effort to “back-breed” something like the prehistoric porker. He also had to acquire the appropriate technology and to become proficient in its use. Often working from scanty evidence, perhaps a fragment of rock carving, Reynolds fashioned mattock hoes and digging sticks and wooden ards to stir the soil. He crafted neck yokes and horn yokes, and trained cattle to them both.

For sowing Reynolds had to procure not only the right kinds of food crops but also the right kinds of weeds. Paleobotanists working with carbonized seeds or with seed impressions fired into pottery had already identified the major varieties of wheat grown in pre-Roman Britain, notably emmer and spelt, now cultivated only in remote regions of Asia Minor. Reynolds obtained samples of these rare cereals, which are cultivated at Butser under a variety of experimen-

tal regimes: manured and unfertilized, sown in spring and in autumn, raised on plots cleared variously by ax and fire. In certain fields weeds are permitted to grow naturally; in others special varieties, long extinct in the British countryside, are deliberately introduced. (One field at the farm is reserved exclusively for the propagation of unusual weeds.) The purpose of this diversity is to evaluate the degree to which the variables tested affect yields. Most of the experiments have been planned to last for at least twenty seasons, to ensure a valid annual average. Some of the trials have by now been under way for eleven or twelve years.

The preliminary results have surprised both archaeologists and historians. Though Butser's crops have been planted on unimproved ground and tended with primitive tools, Reynolds has been getting enormous yields—larger, for example, than any yields indicated by written records from medieval times, and almost as large as those that British farmers were achieving on the eve of the First World War. The Iron Age Briton, it would appear, was no subsistence farmer.

Consider the spelt wheat sown every October in Field No. 2. Reynolds has never added manure to this field and never allowed it to lie fallow. He has not rotated the grain with Celtic beans, which fix nitrogen in the soil. Cultivation to control weeds has deliberately been kept to a minimum. Apart from planting seed in soil that ards have stirred and scored, virtually nothing has been done in Field No. 2 to enhance the viability of its crop. And yet the field has been producing, on average, more than three quarters of a ton of spelt wheat per acre every year. Wheat farmers in the United States last year did not produce much more: a little over a ton per acre. The seed-to-yield ratio on Butser's Field No. 2—the volume of seed wheat planted to volume of wheat harvested—has averaged 1:28. That by far exceeds the 1:3 or 1:6 that medieval enumerators, according to the historian Marc Bloch, deemed a "reasonable" yield. It is comparable to the ratios achieved by modern American farmers. And it was produced on an inhospitable plot of land where modern wheat strains do not prosper.

REYNOLDS DROVE ME up to the research farm, of which Field No. 2 is a part, on a wild Friday morning, amid thirty-mile-an-hour winds and a fine,

biting rain that etched color in the cheeks. In a few weeks, with the onset of winter, mud on the steep roads would make the site inaccessible to motor vehicles. For now, however, the route was clear. We climbed to the summit, our progress acknowledged with tweedy benevolence by the rare pedestrian, out for a bracing stroll. At last we emerged onto a broad, bald plateau. Butser Hill is the highest point in Hampshire, and in good weather it affords a splendid view of the South Downs. On this late autumn day the view consisted of low, gray clouds, relentlessly chased eastward by a constant gale.

It was to the South Downs that Sherlock Holmes repaired in his retirement, to keep bees, and Reynolds had a bit of Holmes about him as he headed toward the farm, interpreting the terrain along the way. "What we're walking on now is a Neolithic track," he explained, indicating a faint, grassy depression. "There's another, over there. The rutted path this one merges into was a medieval road, once the main route from London to Portsmouth. They didn't have much choice about running roads up hills back then. Nowadays, of course, they can slice right through, like the A3 does down there." In isolated moments, when the weather caught its breath, we could hear the traffic speeding far below. "The cross-dike intersecting here predates the road," Reynolds continued. "I doubt it was meant to serve as a fortification. It was probably a simple boundary marker to divide the spur from the rest of the hill. Our farm, as you can see, is on the spur, which we know was occupied during the Iron Age. Let's go down."

Little Butser extends outward from Butser Hill like an accusing finger. A path runs down its middle for perhaps a hundred yards, between snaking fences of latticed hazel rods. Pens and fields lie on either side. At the center of the site stand two thatched roundhouses, of different sizes and designs. A modern wire-mesh fence surrounds the entire farm to keep out rabbits, which did not inhabit Celtic Britain. Rabbits, probably introduced in Norman times, are what Reynolds calls an "unwanted variable."

The fence is not the only twentieth-century intrusion. Little Butser has been painstakingly surveyed, and metal markers are embedded in the ground as reference points. There is also a compact weather station to monitor wind velocity and direction, rainfall, air tem-

perature, and the temperature of the soil at six different depths. Someone on the small Butser staff must collect the data every day, even if that means, as it does for six months of the year, hiking half a mile up to the spur.

"Because we're dealing with plants and animals, we have to keep detailed records on the weather," Reynolds said. "And not just 'weather' but the microclimate of the spur itself. We probably just went through three different microclimates on our walk from the top. As you might imagine, conditions up here become marginal occasionally. I've been picked up by the winds and carried three or four yards. It was like hang-gliding without the glider. But I wanted the most hostile landscape you could grow something on."

Reynolds unlocked the gate to the compound and we walked down the path between a herd of Dexter cattle and a flock of Soay sheep. Dexter and Highland cattle are Reynolds's stand-ins for *Bos taurus*—the extinct Celtic shorthorn. The Soays, however, are the genuine article. On Scotland's windswept St. Kilda Islands, Soay sheep have thriven since prehistoric times, preserved by their isolation. They are a boisterous breed. It was shortly before the mating season when I visited the research farm, and rutting Soay rams were vying to establish dominance. One hapless pair locked horns and could not disengage. Reynolds entered the fold and eased apart the tangled spirals.

The first foray at Butser into Iron Age architecture, the Maiden Castle house, occupies the top of the spur. It has stood for almost a decade, through snow and rain and frost. Winds of hurricane force have done it little harm. It has never leaked. But the structure has begun to sag visibly, the result of an error in construction made when the rafters were fastened to the uprights. Years of stress have called attention to the mistake. The rakish slant of the building's roof serves less as a rebuke than as a reminder that the key ingredient in any Butser experiment is time.

Parcels of woodland are put to the torch and then observed over time as plant life returns. Trenches are dug and earthworks erected; then they are left alone and allowed to erode. Reynolds is obsessed with what, in his own words, "shows up in the long term." That is one reason why he experiments continually with pits, which are found by the hundreds, in a variety of shapes and

sizes, whenever an Iron Age site is excavated.

Pits: if not for rubbish, as is often supposed, then what were they for? Reynolds has established, among other things, that a chalk-lined hole five feet deep and four feet wide, when sealed airtight with moist clay and topsoil, can safely preserve a ton of grain for years. Pits may also have been used for tanning leather and storing water, for making silage and salting meat. Perhaps some harbored potter's clay. Others may have served as larders. Beside the Maiden Castle house are sunk half a dozen pits, each the subject of a different experiment in pit technology. A few of these sprout tubes and gauges, for tracking temperatures and gas concentrations in the chambers below.

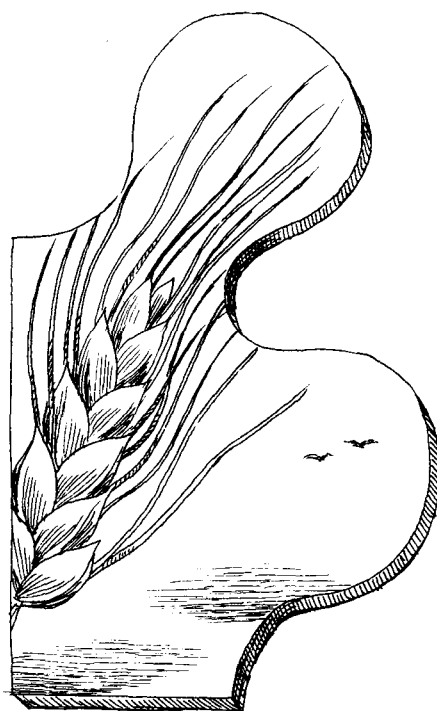
BETWEEN LITTLE Butser's pits and Little Butser's prow lie Little Butser's prodigious fields. Each is the size of an average Celtic plot—a quarter of an acre or so. Along the edges of some of the fields, lynchets have begun to form. Winter sowing was set to commence within a few weeks, and several farmhands were at work, courtesy of Britain's Youth Training Scheme and Community Manpower Program.

"The yields we've been getting lend credence to the claims of classical writers like Strabo and Caesar, otherwise hard to accept, that Britain was a significant exporter of grain," Reynolds said. "In fact, Britain may well have been the breadbasket of Northern Europe. If this was the case, then the suggestion that many of our 'rubbish pits' were really granaries becomes rather persuasive. The size of our yields has other implications. For example, the population density of Iron Age Britain was probably far higher than we have supposed, particularly when you consider the nutritional quality of emmer and spelt. They're extremely hard to thresh, but they have about double the protein of modern bread wheats."

As population increased, so did competition for arable land. Reynolds believes that considerably more of the British countryside was cultivated during the Iron Age than is cultivated now. Because Celtic field systems are visible almost exclusively on hillsides, it used to be thought that Iron Age Britons lacked the technology to cope with the heavier clay of the valleys. But Reynolds and others have shown that the early farmers exploited the valleys fully. The move-

ment of fields ever farther up the hillsides represents a remarkable agricultural expansion. Only after the Romans came were marginal lands like Butser Hill turned over to grazing. It is because they have been grazed for millennia rather than plowed for millennia that Britain's hills today display the imprint of the Celtic farmer. In the valleys few traces of his fields survive.

"An agricultural surplus indicates something else about Iron Age Britain," Reynolds said. "Celtic society was initially one of farmers, with a warrior elite and a small class of priests and artisans. Surpluses of food would have freed large numbers of people from dependence on



the land. We see glimmers of this whenever we excavate a so-called hill-fort: there are signs of urbanization, of economic specialization. After a point in the Iron Age you probably didn't thatch your own house; you hired a thatcher. You didn't make your own pottery; you went to a potter. I think that in 300 B.C. we are dealing with a much more complex, sophisticated, organized, and stable society than we tend to give it credit for."

In a famous article published nearly half a century ago the historian Lynn White, Jr., lamented the reluctance of his colleagues to analyze what was mundane about the past. He wrote, "It is startling to reflect that we have, as a rule, only the vaguest notion of how the men of the Middle Ages actually did things, and how, from time to time, they

learned to do them better." What held true for medieval times holds doubly true today for the Iron Age. Much as the advent of social history has helped redress the balance in historical studies, so experimental archaeology has begun to make a powerful contribution to our knowledge of the prehistoric.

A great deal, of course, remains to be done—and, at Butser, redone. Reynolds's reconstructed "sickle" proved a useless tool at harvest and was readily discarded by the reapers. (It was excellent, however, for splitting hazel rods.) His reconstructed "grain dryer" was not efficient at drying grain but turned out to be ideal for malting barley. (The malt produced was roughly comparable to that used by Guinness.) The archaeologists at Butser Hill are still trying to figure out how the woodlands would have been managed. They also haven't yet calculated the total manpower needs of their Iron Age farm. Important investigations continue into "data recovery": establishing not only what archaeological evidence is supposed to look like but also how it can be retrieved. After the passage of thousands of years, what minute chemical traces may remain of a certain human activity? How does one reconstruct plant populations from the pattern of pollen distribution in the soil? How deep underground might earthworm activity have deposited debris from the surface?

Reynolds emphasized that his work at Butser, like the experimental work of other archaeologists on other questions, is not an entirely novel approach to the study of the past. Rather, in his view experimental archaeology is bringing to the larger discipline some very old perspectives. "I don't think that what we're doing here really represents any new branch of archaeology, or even a twig," he said. "Rather, it's part of the main trunk. At least it should be. The only way to refine archaeology as a discipline is to conduct experimental trials. That is not a new idea. The original British antiquarians did many of the kinds of things we're doing at Butser. The vicar who discovered a hand-axe—the first thing he would do was conduct a little experiment, to see if he could chop down a tree with it. Archaeology for a time tended to turn away from all that. We're just turning back."

—Cullen Murphy

Cullen Murphy is the managing editor of *The Atlantic*.

SAY IT AIN'T SO, COKE

BY ROY BLOUNT, JR.

IN THE WAKE of Coca-Cola's epochal decision to change its taste, certain questions remain.

Must "market points" dictate formula?

The Coca-Cola Company, although it still holds a lion's share of soft-drink sales, has seen that share shrink by several market points. Each of those points represents \$250 million in sales. Therefore Coke has come up with a taste that is flatter, sweeter—more like that of its leading competitor, Pepsi. By that logic, if *60 Minutes* started losing ratings points to *Fame*, Mike Wallace would start break-dancing. The Reagan Administration has done something similar in Latin America: in order to stop the spread of Marxism-Leninism, it has adopted a stance that smacks of the Brezhnev Doctrine. Someone should look into the feasibility of assigning precise economic value to what we might call "integrity points."

Is it idle to speak of soft drinks and imperialism in the same breath?

The spread of Coke bottles into far-off climes has long been a symbol of—some would say—pushy Americanization. There has never been an ickier expression of we-are-the-worldism than the well-known Coke jingle:

I'd like to teach the world to sing
In perfect harmony.

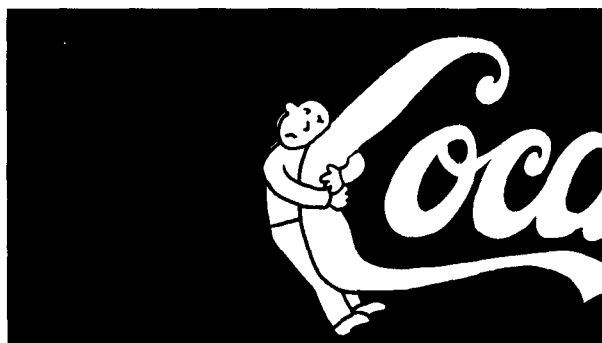
I'd like to buy [*sic*] the world a Coke
And keep it company.

If a freedom-loving person were forced to choose between a world in which all people waved Coke bottles and one in which all people waved hammers and sickles, he would presumably take the former. But he wouldn't love it. Especially if Coke is going to change as the wind blows. What if China makes a soft drink that tastes like fermented rice and Coke loses more market points?

Setting aside international implications for a moment, is what we are seeing here the Repepsipublicanizing of America?

For years Pepsi was the GOP pop, Coke the Democratic. Donald M. Kendall, the chairman of the board and chief executive officer of PepsiCo, Inc., is a

longtime friend of President Richard Nixon's, and during the Nixon Administration, Pepsi entered Russia. Jimmy Carter, while readying his presidential campaign, called the Coca-Cola Company "my own state department," and during the Carter Administration, Coke entered China. Then Reagan took upon himself the mantles of FDR, JFK, and Truman; Pepsi signed up Geraldine Ferraro; and Coke became more like Pepsi. What is left of Coke, or of the Democratic Party, as we have known it?



How about all those people—a majority of soda drinkers—who were fond of the old Coke?

We may anticipate hoarding, black-marketeering, rich people putting in Coke cellars. And one other intriguing possibility: Pepsi might come out with an ancillary cola that tastes a little less flat, a little less sweet. Something called Pepsi-Tart, or Pepsi-Fizz, or, what the heck, Pepsi-Coca.

And how about this writer's reactions?

Until the change, I had always thought of Coke as, relatively speaking, the class act. This belief might be ascribed to my having grown up right outside Atlanta, Coke's corporate and ancestral home. But I was exposed from an early age to Coke and Pepsi both. In fact, I went through a period in high school when I would go into Tatum's drugstore on the Decatur, Georgia, town square after baseball practice, sit at the soda fountain, order a fountain Pepsi, drink a little bit out of it, lean over the counter (surreptitiously or not, depending on who the incumbent soda jerk was), squirt a little extra Pepsi syrup or soda water into my glass, drink a little bit more, and go on topping up almost indefinitely. Meanwhile my teammates

and I would wait for someone to drive the wrong way around the square so that we could run outside and shout, "Are you CRAZY?! You're going around the square backward!" This was in many ways a gratifying time in my life. It is worth noting, however, that Tatum's did not serve fountain Coke. I always thought Coke had more edge, more snap. My assumption was that Pepsi wished it had access to Coke's secret ingredient, so that it could taste more like Coke. I regarded Pepsi as Cokesque. Coke *invented* cola, right? In recent years I have ceased to drink cola, except occasionally when I feel bad. I prefer seltzer, beer, rum, orange juice, wine, gin, cold water, grape juice, vodka, iced tea (*not* canned), margaritas, eggnog, stout, buttermilk, pineapple juice, slivovitz, ale, coffee, grapefruit juice, cognac, and limeade. Compared to any of these beverages, cola now tastes gucky to me.

Among colas, however, the old Coke seemed least gucky. When I found out that Coke wanted to be more like Pepsi instead of the other way around, a small but long-standing aspect of my world view turned upside-down. Next you'll be telling me something really devastating—that Louis Armstrong always wanted to play more like Al Hirt.

Is it fair to describe Coke's new taste as flatter, sweeter, more like Pepsi?

The Coca-Cola Company says no. Committed Coke drinkers of my acquaintance say yes. One thing that everyone, except oenologists, might agree on: the tongue and palate, essential as they are to both language and gustation, cannot produce words for what anything—except sugar, salt, sour cream, fish in general, and defeat—tastes like.

Is there anything that ought, for the sake of world betterment, to be more like Pepsi?

How about cocaine. This is not likely to happen, however, because it would cause cocaine to lose market points.

If Coke Is It, and also was It, how can they have changed it? □

Roy Blount, Jr., is the author of *One Fell Soup and What Men Don't Tell Women*.

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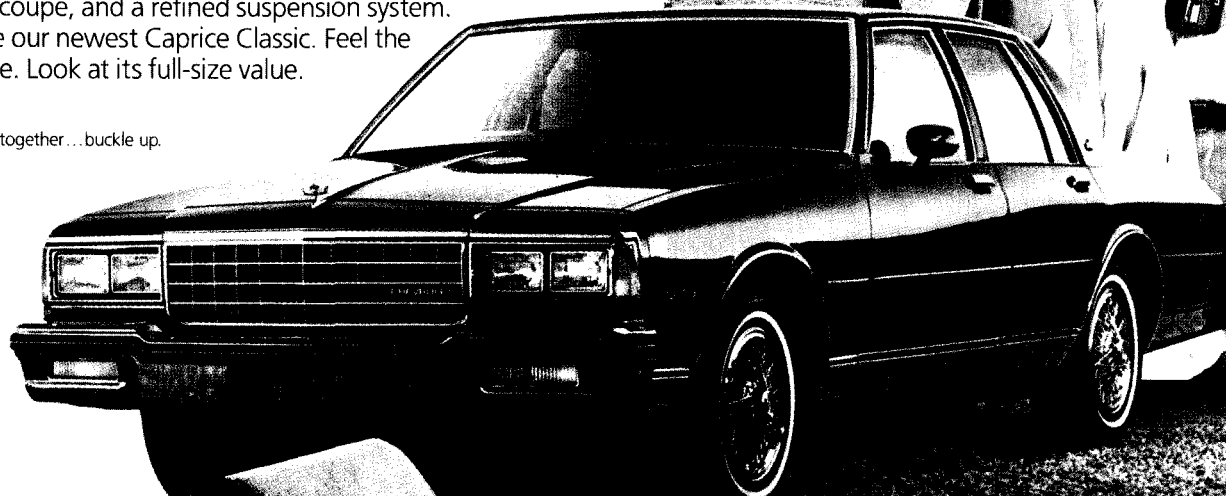
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LAKE WOBEGON DAYS

BY GARRISON KEILLOR



THE TOWN OF LAKE WOBEGON, MINNESOTA, LIES ON the shore against Adams Hill, looking east across the blue-green water to the dark woods. From the south the highway aims for the lake, bends hard left by the magnificent concrete Grecian grain silos, and eases over a leg of the hill past the SLOW CHILDREN sign, bringing the traveler in on Main Street toward the town's one traffic light, which is almost always green. A few elms shade the street. Along the ragged dirt path between asphalt and grass a child walks to Ralph's Pretty Good Grocery, kicking an asphalt chunk ahead of him, which after four blocks he is now mesmerized by, to which he is completely dedicated. At Bunsen Motors the sidewalk begins. A breeze off the lake brings a sweet air of mud and rotting wood, a slight fishy smell, the sweetness of old grease, a sharp whiff of gasoline, fresh tires, spring dust, and, from across the street, the faint essence of tuna fish dish at the Chatterbox Cafe. A stout figure in green coveralls disappears inside. The boy kicks the chunk at the curb once, twice, then lofts it over the curb and sidewalk, across the

concrete to the island of the Pure Oil pumps. He jumps three times on the Bunsen bell hose, making three dings back in the dark garage. The mayor of Lake Wobegon, Clint Bunsen, peers out from the deep pit, under a black Ford pickup. His brother, Clarence, wiping the showroom glass (BUNSEN MOTORS—FORD—NEW & USED—SALES & SERVICE) with an old blue shirt, knocks on the window. The showroom is empty. The boy follows the chunk a few doors north to Ralph's window, which displays two old cardboard placards, one of a cow, one of a pig, each labeled with the names of cuts. An old man sits on a bench, white hair as fine as spun glass poking out under his green feed cap, his grizzled chin on his skinny chest, dozing, the sun at three o'clock now reaching under the faded brown canvas awning up to his belt. He is not Ralph. Ralph is the thin man in the white apron who has stepped out the back door of the store, away from the meat counter, to get a breath of fresh, meatless air. He stands on a rickety porch that looks across the lake, a stone's throw away. The beach there is stony; the sandy beach is two blocks to the north. A girl, perhaps one of his, stands on the diving dock, plugs her nose, and executes a perfect cannonball, and he hears the dull *thunsh*. A quarter mile away a silver boat sits off the weeds in Sunfish Bay. A man in a bright blue jacket waves

Garrison Keillor is the host of the American Public Radio show A Prairie Home Companion. His book about Lake Wobegon, from which this piece is taken, will be published next month by Viking-Penguin, Inc.

his pole; the line is hooked on weeds. The sun makes a trail of shimmering lights across the water. It would make quite a picture if you had the right lens, which nobody in this town has got.

The lake is 678.2 acres, a little more than a section, fed by cold springs and drained from the southeast by a creek, the Lake Wobegon River, which flows to the Sauk, which joins the Mississippi. In 1836 an Italian count waded up the creek, towing his canoe, and camped on the lakeshore, where he imagined for a moment that he was the hero who had found the true headwaters of the Mississippi. Then something about the place made him decide he was wrong. He was right—we're not the headwaters—but what made him jump to that conclusion? What has made so many others look at us and think, *It doesn't start here?*

The woods are red oak, maple, some spruce and pine, birch, alder, and thick brush except where cows have been put, which is like a park. The municipal boundaries take in quite a bit of pasture and cropland, including wheat, corn, oats, and alfalfa, and also the homes of some nine hundred souls, most of them small white frame houses sitting forward on their lots and boasting large, tidy vegetable gardens and modest lawns, many featuring cast-iron deer, small windmills, clothespoles and clotheslines, various plaster animals such as squirrels and lambs and small elephants, white-painted rocks at the end of the driveway, a nice bed of petunias planted within a white tire, and some with a shrine in the rock garden, the Blessed Virgin standing, demure, her eyes averted, arms slightly extended, above the peonies and marigolds. In the garden behind the nunnery next door to Our Lady of Perpetual Responsibility she stands on a brick pedestal and her eyes meet yours with an expression of deep sympathy for the sufferings of the world, including this little town.

It is a quiet town, where much of the day you could stand in the middle of Main Street and not be in anyone's way—not forever, but for as long as a person would want to stand in the middle of a street. It's a wide street; the early Yankee promoters thought they would need it wide to handle the crush of traffic. The double white stripe is for show, as are the two parking meters. Two was all they could afford. They meant to buy more meters with the revenue, but nobody puts nickels in them because parking nearby is free. Parking is diagonal.

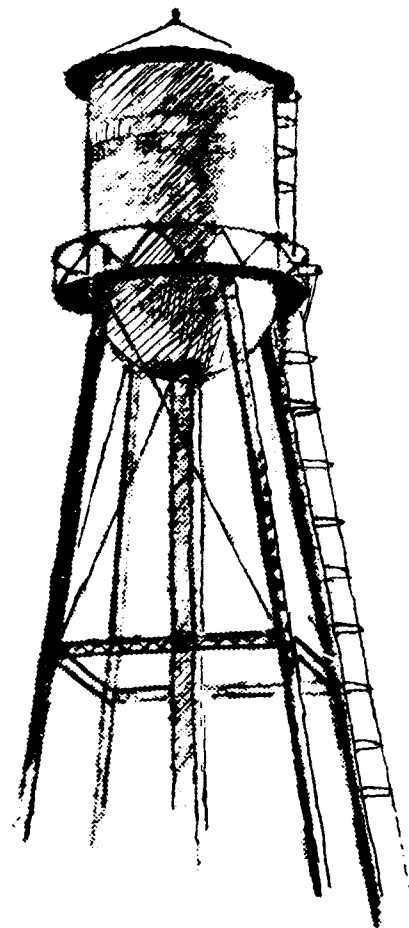
Merchants call it downtown, other people say "up town"—two words, as in "I'm going up town to get me some socks."

On Main between Elm and McKinley are four two-story brick buildings on the north side, six on the south, and the Central Building, three stories, which has sandstone blocks with carved scallops above the third-floor windows. Other buildings include the Ingqvist Block, Union Block, Security Block, Farmers Block, and Oleson Block, their names written on sandstone or granite tablets set in the fancy brickwork at the top. Latticed brickwork, brickwork meant to suggest battlements, and brick towers meant to look palatial. They hung a man from a tower for stealing in

1889. He took it rather well. They were tired of his sneaking around lifting hardware off buggies, so they tied a rope to his belt and hoisted him up where they could keep an eye on him.

Most men wear their belts low here, there being so many outstanding bellies, some big enough to have names of their own and be formally introduced. Those men don't suck them in or hide them in loose shirts. They let them hang free, they pat them, they stroke them as they stand around and talk. How could a man be so vain as to ignore this old friend who's been with him at the great moments of his life?

The buildings are quite proud in their false fronts, trying to be everything that two stories can be and a little bit more. The first stories have newer fronts, of aluminum and fake marble and stucco and fiber-glass stonework, meant to make them modern. A child might have cut them off a cornflakes box and fastened them with two tabs, A and B. They go well with the ladies leaving the Chatter-box Cafe from their tuna-sandwich lunch: three old ladies with wispy white hair, in sensible black shoes and long print dresses with the waist up under the bosom, and the fourth in a deep purple pantsuit and purple pumps, wearing a jet-black wig. She, too, is seventy but looks like a thirty-four-year-old who has led a very hard life. She is



Carl Krebsbach's mother, Myrtle, who they say enjoys two pink daiquiris every Friday night and between the first and second hums "Tiptoe Through the Tulips" and does a turn that won her first prize in a Knights of Columbus talent show in 1936 at the Alhambra Ballroom. It burned to the ground in 1955. "Myrtle has a natural talent, you know," people have always said, according to her. "She had a chance to go on to Minneapolis." Perhaps she is still considering the offer.

Her husband, Florian, pulls his '66 Chevy into a space between two pickups in front of the Clinic. To look at his car you'd think it was 1966 now, not 1985; it's so new, especially the back seat, which looks as if nobody ever sat there unless they were gift-wrapped. He is coming to see Dr. DeHaven about stomach pains that he thinks could be cancer, which he believes he has a tendency toward. Still, though he may be dying, he takes a minute to get a clean rag out of the trunk, soak it with gasoline, lift the hood, and wipe off the engine. He says she runs cooler when she's clean, and it's better if you don't let the dirt get baked on. Nineteen years old, she has only 42,000 miles on her, as he will tell you if you admire how new she looks. "Got her in '66. Just 42,000 miles on her." It's odd, maybe, that a man should be so proud of not having gone far, but not in this town. Under his Trojan Seed Corn cap, pulled down tight on his head, is the face of a boy, and when he talks his voice breaks, as if he hasn't talked enough to get over adolescence completely. Time hardly exists for Florian, who has lived one place all his life, and when he looks at this street and when he sees his wife, he sees them brand-new, like this car. Later, driving the four blocks home at about trolling speed, having forgotten the indignity of a rectal examination, he will notice a slight rhythmic imperfection when the car idles, which he will spend an hour happily correcting.

. . . .

In school we sang

*Hail to thee, Lake Wobegon, the cradle of our youth.
We shall uphold the blue and gold in honor and in truth.
Holding high our lamps, we will be thy champs, and will van-
quish far and near
For WHS, the beacon of the West, the school we love so dear.*

And also

*We're going to fight, fight, fight for Wobegon
And be strong and resolute,
And our mighty foes will fall down in rows
When we poke them in the snoot. (Rah! Rah!)*

But those were only for show. In our hearts our loyalties to home have always been more modest, along the lines of the motto on the town crest—"Sumus quod sumus" (We are what we are)—and of the annual Christmas toast of the Sons of Knute, "There's no place like home when you're



not feeling well," first uttered by a long-ago Knute who missed the annual dinner dance owing to a case of the trots, and even of Mr. Diener's observation "When you're around it all the time, you don't notice it so much." He said this after he tore out the wall between his living room and dining room, which he had not done before for fear that it was there for a reason. In the wall he found the remains of a cat who had been missing for more than a year. The Dieners had not been getting full use of the dining room and had been silently blaming each other. "It's good to know that it wasn't us," he said.

In school and in church we were called to high ideals such as truth and honor by someone perched on truth and hollering for us to come on up, but the truth was that we always fell short. Every spring the Thanatopsis Society sponsored a lecture, in keeping with the will of the late Mrs. Bjornson, who founded the society as a *literary* society, and though the Thanatopsians had long since evolved into a conversational society, they were bound by the terms of her bequest to hire a lecturer once a year and listen. One year it was world federalism (including a demonstration of conversational Esperanto), and then it was the benefits of a unicameral legislature, and in 1955 a man from the University came and gave us "The World of 1980," with slides of bubble-top houses, picture phones, autogyro copter-cars, and floating factories harvesting tasty plankton from the sea. We sat and listened and clapped, but when the chairwoman called for questions from the audience, what most of us wanted to know we didn't dare ask: How much are you getting paid for this?

Left to our own devices, we Wobegonians go straight for small potatoes. Majestic doesn't appeal to us; we like the Grand Canyon better with Clarence and Arlene parked in front of it, smiling. We feel uneasy at momentous events.

INCORPORATED UNDER THE LAWS OF MINNESOTA BUT omitted from the map owing to the incompetence of surveyors, first named New Albion by New Englanders who thought it would become the Boston of the West, taking its ultimate name from an Indian phrase that

means either "Here we are!" or "We sat all day in the rain waiting for [you]," Lake Wobegon is the seat of tiny Mist County, the "phantom county in the heart of the heart-land" (Dibbley, *My Minnesota*), founded by Yankee promoters, then found by Norwegian Lutherans who straggled in from the west, having headed first to Lake Agassiz, in what is now North Dakota, a lake that turned out to be prehistoric, and by German Catholics who, bound for Kittson County, stopped a little short, having misread their map, but refused to admit it.

A town with few scenic wonders such as towering pines or high mountains but with some fine people, of whom some are over six feet tall, its highest point is the gold ball on the flagpole atop the Norge Co-op grain elevator south of town on the Great Northern spur, from which Mr. Tollefson can see all of Mist County when he climbs up to raise the flag on national holidays, including Norwegian Independence Day, when the blue cross of Norway is flown. (No flag of Germany has appeared in public since 1917.) Next highest is the water tower, then the boulder on the hill, followed by the cross on the spire of Our Lady, then the spire of Lake Wobegon Lutheran (Christian Synod), the Central Building (three stories), the high school flagpole, the high school, the top row of bleachers at Wally ("Old Hard Hands") Bunsen Memorial Field, the First Ingqvist State Bank, Bunsen Motors, the Hjalmar Ingqvist home, and so forth.

We kids spent a lot of time on the third highest point, Adams Hill, which rose behind the school and commanded a panoramic view of town and lake from the clearing at the crest. As a small boy who listened carefully and came to his own conclusions, I assumed that the hill was where God created our first parents—the man from the dust in the hole where we built fires, the lady from his rib. They lived there for many years in a log cabin like Lincoln's and ate blueberries and sweet corn from the Tolleruds' field. Adam fished for sunnies off the point, and their kids fooled around like we did, Eve sometimes poking her head out the door and telling them to be quiet.

There was no apple tree on Adams Hill, but that didn't weaken my faith; there were snakes. Here, above the school, God created the world.

When I was four, I told my sister about the Creation, and she laughed in my face. She was eight. She gave me a choice between going back on Scripture truth as I knew it and eating dirt, and I ate a pinch of dirt. "Chew it," she said, and I did, so that she could hear it crunch.

I lived in a white house with Mother, Dad, Rudy, and Phyllis, where we raised vegetables in the garden and ate certain things on the correct nights (tuna hot dish on Thursday, liver on Friday, beans and wieners on Saturday, pot roast on Sunday) and sang as we washed dishes:

*Because God made the stars to shine,
Because God made the ivy twine,
Because God made the sky so blue,
Because God made you, that's why I love you.*



God created the world and ordained everything to be right and perfect, then man sinned against God's Will, but God still knew *everything*. Before the world was made, when it was only darkness and mist and waters, God was well aware of Lake Wobegon, my family, and our house, and He had me all sketched out down to what size my feet would be (big), which bike I would ride (a Schwinn), and the five ears of corn I'd eat for supper that night. He had meant me to be there; it was His Will, which it was up to me to discover the rest of and obey, but the first part—being me, in Lake Wobegon—He had brought about as He had hung the stars and decided on blue for the sky.

The crisis came years later, when Dad mentioned that in 1938 he and Mother had almost moved to Brooklyn Park, north of Minneapolis, but didn't because Grandpa offered them our house in Lake Wobegon, which was Aunt Becky's until she died and left it to Grandpa, and Dad got a job with the post office as a rural mail carrier. I was fourteen when I got this devastating news: that I was me and had my friends and lived in my house only on account of a pretty casual decision about real estate, otherwise I'd have been a Brooklyn Park kid where I didn't know a soul. I imagined Dad and Mother talking it over in 1938—"Oh, I don't care, it's up to you, either one is okay with me"—as my life hung in the balance. Thank goodness God was at work, I thought, because you sure couldn't trust your parents to do the right thing.

Until Brooklyn Park became a suburb, it was some of the best farmland in Minnesota, but Lake Wobegon is mostly poor, sandy soil, and every spring the earth heaves up a new crop of rocks. Piles of rock ten feet high in the corners of fields, picked by generations of us, monuments to our industry. Our ancestors chose the place, tired from their long journey, sad for having left the motherland behind, and this place reminded them of there, so they set-

tled here, forgetting that they had left there because the land wasn't so good. So the new life turned out to be a lot like the old except the winters were worse.

Since arriving in the New World, the good people of Lake Wobegon have been skeptical of progress. When the first automobile chugged into town, driven by the Ingqvist twins, the crowd's interest was muted, less wholehearted than if there had been a good fire. When the first strains of music wafted from a radio, people said, "I don't know." Of course, the skeptics gave in and got one themselves. But the truth is, we still don't know.

For this reason it's a hard place to live in from the age of fourteen on up to whenever you recover. At that age, you're no skeptic but a true believer, starting with belief in yourself as a natural phenomenon never before seen on this earth and therefore incomprehensible to all the others. You believe that if God were to make you a millionaire and an idol whose views on the world were eagerly sought by millions, it would be no more than what you deserved. This belief is not encouraged there.

So most of Lake Wobegon's children leave, as I did, to realize themselves as finer persons than they were allowed to be at home.

I ran a constant low fever from the age of fourteen, waiting for my ride to come and take me away to the dance. I lay in bed at night watching the red beacon on top of the water tower, a clear signal to me of the beauty and mystery of a life that waited for me far away, and thought of Housman's poem.

Loveliest of trees, the cherry now
Is hung with bloom along the bough
And stands about the woodland ride
Wearing white for Eastertide.

Now, of my three score years and ten,
Twenty will not come again . . .

and would have run away to where people would appreciate me had I known of such a place, had I thought my parents would understand. But if I had said, "About the woodlands I will go to see the cherry hung with snow,"

they would have said, "Oh, no, you don't. You're going to stay right here and finish up what I told you to do three hours ago. Besides, those aren't cherry trees, those are crabapples."

Now I lie in bed in St. Paul and look at the moon, which reminds me of the one over Lake Wobegon.

I'm forty-two years old. I haven't lived there for almost twenty-five years. I've lived in a series of eleven apartments and three houses, most within a few miles of each other in St. Paul and Minneapolis. Every couple years the urge strikes, to pack the books and unscrew the table legs and haul off to a new site. The mail is forwarded, sometimes from a house several stops back down the line, the front of the envelope covered with addresses, but friends are lost, more all the time—it's sad to think about it. All those long conversations in vanished kitchens when for an evening we achieved a perfect understanding that no matter what happened, we were true comrades and our affection would endure, and now our friendship is gone to pieces and I can't account for it. Why don't I see you anymore? Did I disappoint you? Did you call me one night to say you were in trouble and hear a tone in my voice that made you say you were just fine?

LAKE WOBEGON, WHATEVER ITS FAULTS, IS NOT dreary. Back for a visit one August, I crossed Main Street toward Ralph's and stopped, hearing a sound from childhood in the distance. The faint mutter of ancient combines. Norwegian bachelor farmers combining in their antique McCormacks, the old six-footers. New combines cut a twenty-foot swath, but these guys aren't interested in getting done sooner; it would only mean a longer wait until bedtime. I stood and listened. My eyes got blurry. Of course, thanks to hay fever, wheat has always put me in an emotional state, and then the clatter brings back memories of old days of glory in the field, when I was a boy among giants. My uncle lifted me up and put me on the seat so I could ride alongside him. The harness jingled on Brownie and Pete and Queenie and Scout, and we



bumped along in the racket, row by row. Now all the giants are gone; everyone's about my size or smaller. Few people could lift me up, and I don't know that I'm even interested. It's sad to be so old. I postponed it as long as I could, but when I weep at the sound of a combine, I know I'm there. A young man wouldn't have the background for it.

That uncle is dead now, one of three who went down like dominoes, of bad tickers, when they reached seventy. The Knutes who used to put on a goose chase every spring now have bad backs. I do a radio show named for the cemetery (Our Prairie Home), where I know more and more people, including Miss Heinemann, my English teacher. She was old (my age now) when I had her. A massive lady with chalk dust on her blue wool dress, whose hair was hacked short, who ran us like a platoon, who wept when I recited the sonnet she assigned me to memorize. Each of us got one, and I was hoping for "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?" or "Let me not to the marriage of true minds," which might be *useful* in some situations, but was given No. 73, "That time of year thou mayst in me behold," which I recited briskly, three quatrains hand over fist, and nailed on the couplet at the end. The next year I did "When, in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes."

Listening to combines on a dry day that is leaning toward fall, I still remember all the lines, not unusual in a town where everyone carries a little Shakespeare, some Riley, a psalm or two, "Whan that Aprill with his shoures soote," Longfellow, maybe Frost, in their heads.

That time of year thou mayst in me behold
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
Bare ruin'd choirs, where late the sweet birds sang. . . .

Learned at sixteen in a classroom that smelled of Wild-root hair oil and Nesbitt's orange pop on my breath, it cheers me up, even "the twilight of such day/As after sunset fadeth in the west" and "the ashes of his youth."

This thou perceivest, which makes thy love more strong,
To love that well which thou must leave ere long.

WHAT'S SPECIAL ABOUT THIS TOWN? IT'S PRETTY MUCH like a lot of towns, isn't it? There is a perfectly good answer to that question; it takes only a moment to think of it.

For one thing, the Statue of the Unknown Norwegian. If other towns have one, we don't know about it. Sculpted by a man named O'Connell or O'Connor in 1896, the granite youth stands in a small plot at a jog in the road where a surveyor knocked off for lunch years ago and looks down Main Street to the lake. A proud figure, his back is erect, his feet are on the ground, on account of no money remained for a pedestal, and his eyes—well, his eyes are a matter of question. Probably the artist meant him to exude confidence in the New World, but his eyes are set a little

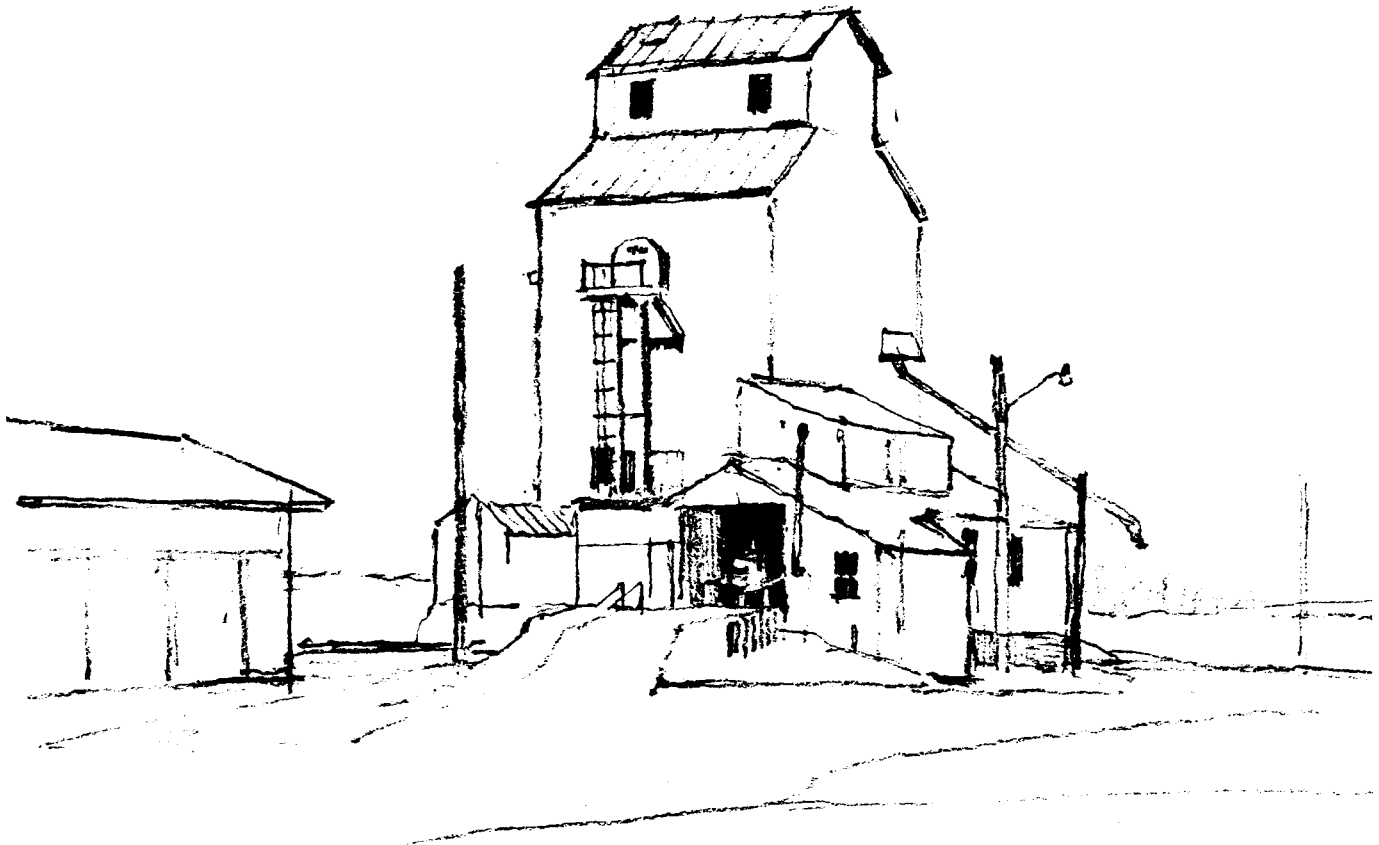
deep, so that dark shadows appear in the late afternoon and by sunset he looks worried. His confident smile turns into a forced grin. In the morning he is stepping forward, his right hand extended in greeting, but as the day wears on, he hesitates, and finally he appears to be about to turn back. The right hand means "Wait here. I think I forgot something."

Nevertheless, he is a landmark and an asset, so it was a shame when the tornado of 1947 did damage to him. That tornado skipped in from the northeast; it blew away one house except for a dresser mirror that wasn't so much as cracked—amazing; it's in the historical society now, and people still bring their relatives to look at it. It also picked up a brand-new Chevy pickup and set it down a quarter mile away. *On a road. In the right-hand lane.* In town it took the roof off the Lutheran church, where nobody was, and missed the Bijou, which was packed for *Shame*, starring Cliff DeCarlo. And it blew a stalk of quackgrass about six inches into the Unknown Norwegian, in an unusual place, a place where you wouldn't expect to find grass in a person, a part of the body where you've been told to insert nothing bigger than your finger in a washcloth.

Bud, our municipal employee, pulled it out, of course, but the root was imbedded in the granite, so it keeps growing out. Bud has considered using a pre-emergent herbicide on him but is afraid it will leave a stain on the side of the head, so when he mows, he simply reaches up the Unknown's right ear and snips off the blade with his fingernails. It's not so noticeable, really; you have to look for it to see it.

The plaque that would've been on the pedestal the town couldn't afford was bolted to a brick and set in the ground until Bud dug it out because it was dinging up his mower blade. Now, in the historical-society museum in the basement of the town hall, it sits next to the Lake Wobegon runestone, which proves that Viking explorers were here in 1381. Unearthed by a Professor Oftedahl or Ostenwald around 1921, alongside County Road 2, where the Professor, motoring from Chicago to Seattle, had stopped to bury garbage, the small black stone is covered with Viking runic characters which read (translated by him): "8 of [us] stopped & stayed awhile to visit & have [coffee] & a short nap. Sorry [you] weren't here. Well, that's about [it] for now."

Every Columbus Day the runestone is carried up to the school and put on a card table in the lunchroom for the children to see, so they can know their true heritage. It saddens Norwegians that America still honors this Italian, who arrived late in the New World and by accident, who wasn't even interested in New Worlds but only in spices. Out on a spin in search of curry powder and hot peppers—a man on a voyage to the grocery—he stumbled onto the land of heroic Vikings and proceeded to get the credit for it. And then to name it *America*, after Amerigo Vespucci, an Italian who sat in Italy and drew incredibly inaccurate maps of the New World. By rights it should be called Erica, after Eric the Red, who did the work five hundred



years earlier. The United States of Erica. Erica the Beautiful. The Erican League.

Not many children come to see the runestone where it spends the rest of the year. The museum is a locked door in the town hall, down the hall and to the left, by the wash-room. Viola Torsdahl, the clerk, has the key and isn't happy to be bothered for it. "I don't know why I ever agreed to do it. You know, they don't pay me a red cent for this," she says as she digs around in a junk drawer for it.

The museum is in the basement. The light switch is halfway down the steps, to your left. The steps are concrete, narrow and steep. It's going to be very interesting, you think, to look at these many objects from olden days, and then when you put your hand on the switch, you feel something crawl on it. Not a fly. You brush the spider off, and then you smell the must from below, like bilge water, and hear a slight movement, as if a man sitting quietly in the dark for several hours had just risen slowly and the chair had scraped a quarter inch. He sighs a faint sigh, licks his upper lip, and shifts the ax from his left to his right hand so that he can scratch his nose. He is left-handed, evidently. No need to find out any more about him. You turn off the light and shut the door.

WHAT'S SO SPECIAL ABOUT THIS TOWN IS NOT THE food, though Ralph's Grocery has got in a case of fresh cod. Frozen, but it's fresher than what's been in his freezer for months. In the grocery business you have to throw out stuff sometimes, but Ralph is Norwe-

gian and it goes against his principles. People bend down and peer into the meat case. "Give me a pork loin," they say. "One of those in the back, one of the pink ones." "These in front are better," he says. "They're more aged. You get better flavor." But they want a pink one, so Ralph takes out a pink one, bites his tongue. This is the problem with being in retail—you can't say what you think.

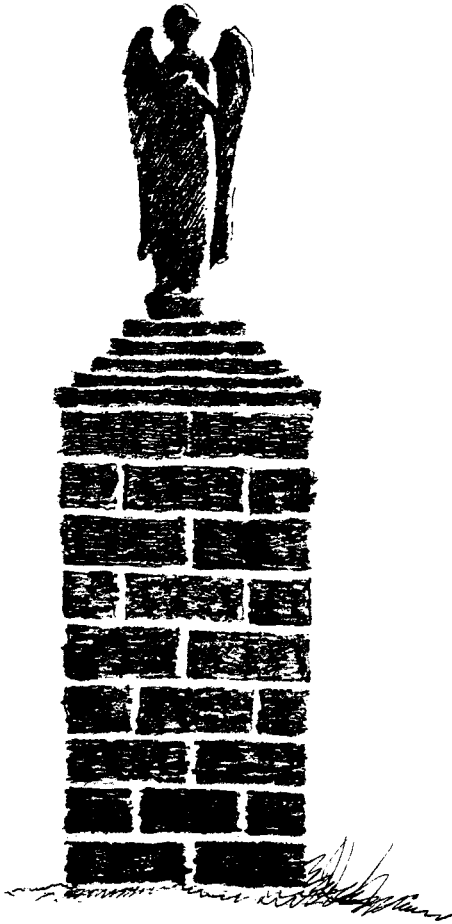
More and more people are sneaking off to Higgledy-Piggledy, in St. Cloud, where you find two acres of food, a meat counter a block long with huge wallopings roasts and steaks big enough to choke a horse and exotic fish lying on crushed ice.

Once Ralph went to his brother Benny's for dinner and Martha put baked swordfish on the table. Ralph's face burned. His own sister-in-law! "It's delicious," said Mrs. Ralph. "Yeah," Ralph said, "if it wasn't for the mercury poisoning, I'd take swordfish every day of the week." Cod, he pointed out, is further down in the food chain, doesn't collect the mercury that the big fish do. Forks paused in midair. He would have gone on to describe the effects of mercury on the body, how it lodges in the brain, wiping the slate clean until you wind up in bed attached to tubes and can't remember your own name, but his wife contacted him on his ankle. Later she said, "You had no business saying that."

"I'll have no business, period," he said, "if people don't wake up."

"Well, it's a free country, and she has a perfect right to go shop where she wants to."

"Sure she does, and she can go live there, too."



IN A TOWN WHERE EVERYONE WAS EITHER LUTHERAN or Catholic, our family was not and never had been. We were Sanctified Brethren, a sect so tiny that nobody but us and God knew about it, so when kids asked what I was, I just said Protestant. It was too much to explain, like having six toes. You would rather keep your shoes on.

Grandpa Cotten was once tempted toward Lutheranism by a preacher who gave a rousing sermon on grace that Grandpa heard as a young man while taking Aunt Esther's dog home who had chased a Model T across town. He sat down on the church steps and listened to the voice boom out the open windows until he made up his mind to go in and unite with the truth, but he took one look from the vestibule and left. "He was dressed up like the Pope of Rome," said Grandpa, "and the altar and the paintings and the gold candlesticks—my gosh, it was just a big show. And he was reading the whole darn thing off a page, like an actor."

Jesus said, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them," and the Brethren believed that was enough. We met in Uncle Al and Aunt Flo's bare living room, with plain folding chairs arranged facing in toward the middle. No clergyman in a black smock. No organ or piano, for that would make one person too prominent. No upholstery—it would lead to complacency. No picture of Jesus—He was in our Hearts.

The faithful sat down at the appointed hour and waited for the Spirit to move one of them to speak or to pray or to give out a hymn from our Little Flock hymnal. No musical notation, for music must come from the heart and not off a page. We sang the texts to a tune that fit the meter, of the many tunes we all knew. The idea of reading a prayer was sacrilege to us—"If a man can't remember what he wants to say to God, let him sit down and think a little harder," Grandpa said.

"There's the Lord's Prayer," said Aunt Esther meekly. We were sitting on the porch after Sunday dinner. Esther and Harvey were visiting from Minneapolis and had attended Lake Wobegon Lutheran, she having turned Lutheran when she married him, a subject that was never brought up in our family.

"You call that prayer? Sitting and reciting like a bunch of schoolchildren?"

Harvey cleared his throat and turned to me and smiled. "Speaking of school, how are you doing?" he asked.

There was a lovely silence in the Brethren assembled on Sunday morning as we waited for the Spirit. Either the Spirit was moving someone to speak who was taking his sweet time or else the Spirit was playing a wonderful joke on us and letting us sit, or perhaps silence was the point of it. We sat listening to rain on the roof, distant traffic, a radio playing from across the street, kids whizzing by on bikes, dogs barking, as we waited for the Spirit to inspire us. It was like sitting on the porch with your family, when nobody feels that they have to make talk. So quiet in church. Minutes drifted by in silence that was sweet to us. The old Regulator clock ticked, the rain stopped, and the room changed light as the sun broke through—shafts of brilliant sun through the windows and motes of dust falling through it—the smell of clean clothes and floor wax and wine and the fresh bread of Aunt Flo, which was Christ's body given for us. Jesus in our midst, who loved us. So peaceful; and we loved each other, too. I thought perhaps the Spirit was leading me to say that, but I was just a boy, and children were supposed to keep still.

And my affections were not pure. They were tainted with a sneaking admiration of Catholics—Catholic Christmas, Easter, the Living Rosary, and the Blessing of the Animals, all magnificent. Everything we did was plain, but they were regal—especially the Feast Day of Saint Francis, which they did right out in the open, a feast for the eyes. Cows, horses, some pets, right on the church lawn. The turmoil, animals bellowing and barking and clucking and a cat scheming how to escape and suddenly leaping out of the girl's arms who was holding on tight, the cat dashing through the crowd, dogs straining at the leash, and the ocarina band of third graders playing a song, and the great calm of the sisters, and the flags, and the Knights of Columbus decked out in their handsome black suits—the whole thing was gorgeous. I stared at it until my eyes almost fell out, and then I wished it would go on much longer.

"Christians," my Uncle Al used to say, "do not go in for

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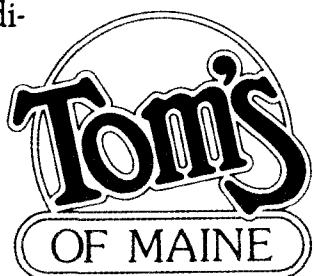
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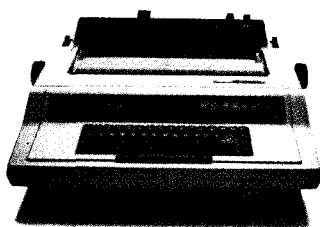
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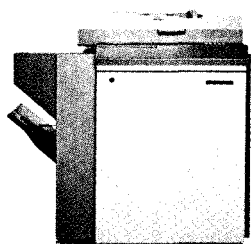
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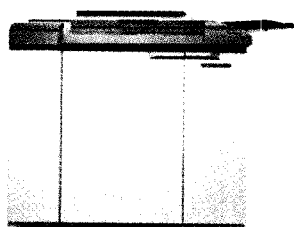
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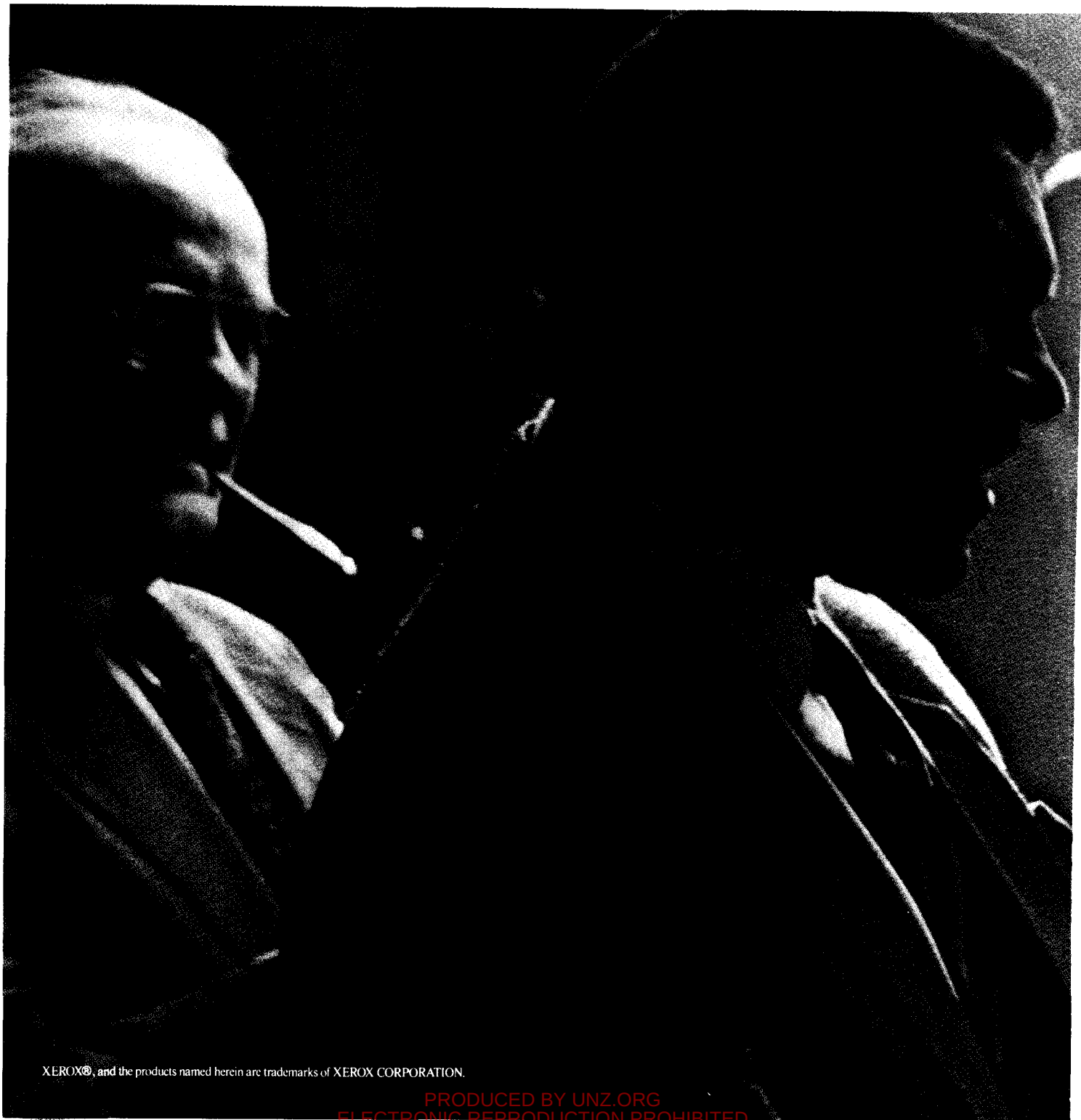
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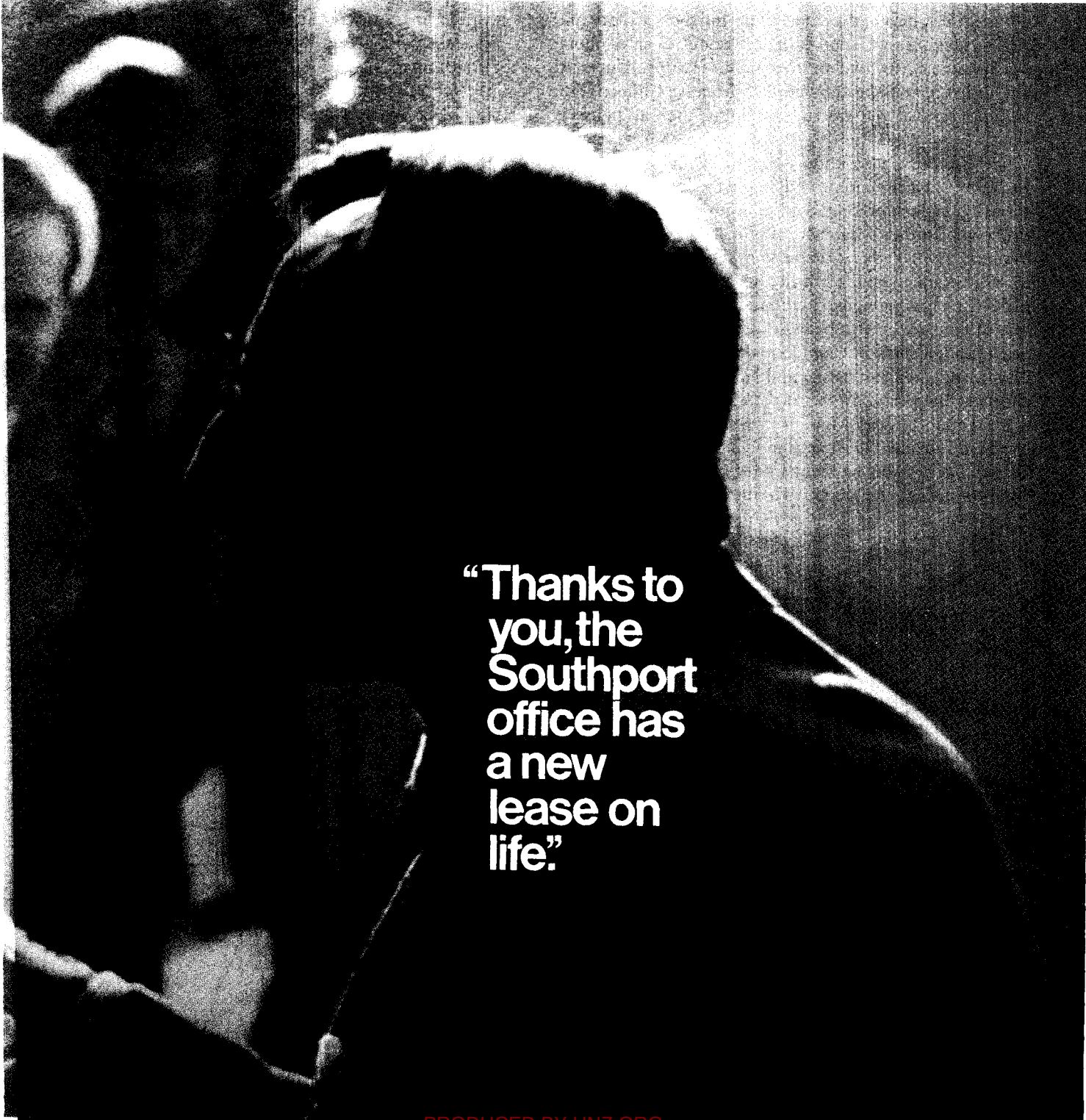
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**"Thanks to
you, the
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a new
lease on
life."**

show," referring to the Catholics. We were sanctified by the blood of the Lord, therefore we were saints, like Saint Francis, but we didn't go in for feasts or ceremonies, involving animals or not. We went in for sitting, all nineteen of us, in Uncle Al and Aunt Flo's living room on Sunday morning and having a plain meeting and singing hymns in our poor thin voices, while not far away the Catholics were whooping it up. I wasn't allowed inside Our Lady, of course, but if the Blessing of the Animals on the Feast Day of Saint Francis was any indication, Lord, I didn't know but what they had elephants in there and acrobats. I sat in our little group and envied them for the splendor and gorgeousness, as we tried to sing without even so much as a harmonica to give us the pitch. Hymns, Uncle Al said, didn't have to be sung perfect, because God looks on the heart, and if you are In The Spirit, then all praise is good.

The Brethren, also known as The Saints Gathered in the Name of Christ Jesus, who met in the living room were all related to each other and raised in the Faith from infancy except Brother Mel, who was rescued from a life of drunkenness, saved as a brand from the burning, a drowning sailor, a sheep on the hillside, whose immense red nose testified to his previous condition. I envied his amazing story of how he came to be with us. Born to godly parents, Mel left home at fifteen and joined the Navy. He sailed to distant lands in a submarine and had exciting experiences while traveling the downward path, which led him finally to the Union Gospel Mission in Minneapolis, where he heard God's voice "as clear as my voice speaking to you." He was twenty-six, he slept under bridges and in abandoned buildings, he drank two quarts of white muscatel

every day, and then God told him that he must be born again, and so he was, and became the new Mel, except for his nose.

Except for his nose, Mel Burgess looked like any forty-year-old Brethren man: sober, preferring dark suits, soft-spoken, tending toward girth. His nose was what made you look twice: battered, swollen, very red with tiny purplish lines, it looked ancient and dead on his otherwise fairly handsome face, the souvenir of what he had been saved from, the "Before" of his "Before . . . and After" advertisement for being born again.

For me, there was nothing before. I was born among the born-again. This living room so hushed, the Brethren in their customary places on folding chairs (the comfortable ones were put away on Sunday morning) around the end table draped with a white cloth and the glass of wine and loaf of bread (unsliced), was as familiar to me as my mother and father, before whom there was nobody. I had always been here.

I never saw the "Before" until the Sunday we drove to St. Cloud for dinner and traipsed into a restaurant that a friend of Dad's had recommended, Phil's House of Good Food. The waitress pushed two tables together and we sat down and studied the menu. My mother blanched at the prices. A chicken dinner went for \$2.50, the roast beef for \$3.75. "It's a nice place," Dad said, multiplying the five of us times \$2.50. "I'm not so hungry, I guess," he said. "Maybe I'll just have soup." We weren't restaurantgoers—"Why pay good money for food you could make better at home?" was Mother's philosophy—so we weren't at all sure about restaurant customs. For example, could a person who had been seated in a restaurant simply get up



and walk out? Would it be proper? Would it be *legal*?

The waitress came and stood by Dad. "Can I get you something from the bar?" she said. Dad blushed a deep red. The question seemed to imply that he looked like a drinker.

"No," he whispered, as if he were turning down her offer to take off her clothes and dance on the table.

Then another waitress brought a tray of glasses to a table of four couples next to us. "Martini," she said, setting the drink down, "whiskey sour, whiskey sour, Manhattan, whiskey sour, gin and tonic, martini, whiskey sour."

"Ma'am? Something from the bar?" Mother looked at her in disbelief.

Suddenly the room changed for us. Our waitress looked hardened, rough, cheap; across the room a woman laughed obscenely, "Haw, haw, haw"; the man with her lit a cigarette and blew a cloud of smoke; a swearword drifted out from the kitchen like a whiff of urine; even the soft lighting seemed suggestive, diabolical. To be seen in such a place on the Lord's Day—*what had we done?*

"Ed," my mother said, rising.

"We can't stay. I'm sorry," Dad told the waitress. We all got up and put on our coats. Everyone in the restaurant had a good long look at us. A bald little man in a filthy white shirt emerged from the kitchen, wiping his hands. "Folks? Something wrong?" he said.

"We're in the wrong place," Mother told him. Mother always told the truth, or something close to it.

"This is *humiliating*," I said out on the sidewalk. "I feel like a *leper* or something. Why do we always have to make such a big production out of everything? Why can't we be like regular people?"

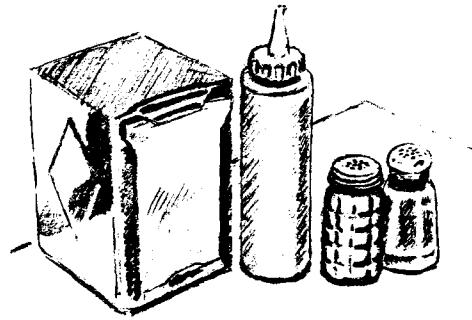
She put her hand on my shoulder. "Be not conformed to this world," she said. I knew the rest by heart: ". . . but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

"Where we gonna eat?" Phyllis asked.

"We'll find someplace reasonable," said Mother, and we walked six blocks across the river and found a lunch counter and ate sloppy joes (called Maid-Rites) for fifteen cents apiece. They did not agree with us, and we were aware of them all afternoon through prayer meeting and Young People's.

A BIG STORM BLEW IN ON WEDNESDAY, THE DAY BEFORE Thanksgiving, which nobody saw coming, not even Bud, who knows weather like my father knows the Great Northern and calls the storms as they roll in from the Coast. This one caught Bud leaning toward autumn.

Freezing rain fell in the morning, turning to heavy snow, and by suppertime we had thirteen inches on the ground and more coming, falling sideways in front of a stiff west wind, and you couldn't see the house across the street. Wally closed the Sidetrack at five o'clock. It's illegal to sell



alcohol in town when you can't see across the street, and when Clarence closed up Bunsen Motors across the street and turned off the blue Ford Motor sign, Wally couldn't see anything over there, so he called it a day even though Mr. Berge had Mr. Lundberg on the run at cribbage and was closing in for the kill and was furious, of course. He yanked his overcoat off the hook and jammed his arms into it and glared out the window at the snow, waiting for a good sharp remark to come to mind. "Well," he said at last, "I think I'll go home."

Clarence walked five blocks home, which he had been doing for a few weeks since he read an article about the heart, which his daughter Barbara Ann had sent him along with a picture of a bicycle clipped from the Sears catalogue. She and her husband were due for Thanksgiving dinner, and from the look of things, they wouldn't make it. *Nuts!* Clarence liked it when she lectured him about his health, which she did now with every visit. "Daddy," she said in that sweet tone that led right into the legumes. Legumes, garlic, hard breathing, whole-grain cereals, and no cigars and no red meat, plus whatever she had read about recently, maybe the benefits of eating raw cotton or the dangers of chewing on lead pencils. He argued with her only to stimulate further class discussion. "Your grandfather lived to be eighty-four and he lived on cigar butts, fried-chicken skin, and as much Rock 'N Rye whiskey as he could sneak downstairs for without arousing Grandma's suspicions. He kept the bottle in the cellar in his tool chest. The last three years, after he went blind, it was pretty hard for him to explain why he needed a hammer and nails." *Daddy.*

He had been looking forward to her Thanksgiving health homily (maybe a tip on eating raw yams or some new data on cranberry sauce and how the pancreas feels about it). She made him feel like a well-loved man. That she would think a small-town Ford dealer could become Mahatma Gandhi. To most people, Clarence was Clarence, always would be. When he thought of her great faith that he might switch to grass and berries and run marathons, her fond hope of his longevity, he was moved to tears. As he was by her improbable gifts: walking shorts, *kimchee*, Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*. As he was by Arlene's choice of lilac wallpaper for their bedroom: amazing woman. His daughter Donna sent him Whitman's choco-

late-covered cherries and thought lilac was ridiculous.

Over his old brown overcoat, like a shawl, Clarence wore a red wool serape that had hung in his office closet since he wore it to work in a blizzard the March before. It was a gift from Don Eduardo—Eddie Bunsen, his cousin, a postal supervisor at the Minneapolis post office until he retired to a village in the mountains of Michoacán. Clarence sent him a Christmas card every year. *Feliz Navidad*. Don Eduardo and Donna Donna live in a two-room hut overgrown with flowering manzanita, the Airstream they took to Mexico now serving as a chicken coop. He sent Clarence pictures of beautiful brown people and fabulous landscapes that breathed flowers and rain, and the red serape. When Clarence wore it, he felt like he was back in the Thespian Club as the general in *A Message to Garcia*. He thought of those brown faces with high cheekbones and grave, handsome expressions, people at rest before the camera, with nothing to fear at all. That was their handsomeness—courage. Calm courage. Not having to impress anybody. Peace.

Beating his way home, the serape to cover his face, he could smell the animal whose hair this was and his own stale cigar breath. He thought, I got to quit smoking, I'm losing my sense of smell, usually I only smell myself. The snow smelled clean, but like a hospital. For the third or fourth time that day, he thought, *I am dying*.

The thought came to him, struggling home: *You don't have to be very smart to be an adult. Most people are working on half-throttle*. Take this storm, for example. Depressing to see autumn snap shut—what a fine November, then suddenly the fuse blows and she's all over, no warning. But to see Wally at the front door of the Sidetrack saying, "I just wonder if the kids are going to make it up from the Cities tonight"—No, not if they have a brain in their head, they're not going to try to make it anywhere. A foot of snow with a good wind behind it can make you a person in a news story if you're not careful. Couldn't he see? This was a blizzard.

And the phone lines to the Cities were busy all evening.

HARVEST

Bounty, bounty,
silver corn husks cracked down by fat raccoons,
pumpkins squat amidst the sift and fall of seeds,
racks of acorn squash collapsed,
tomatoes split and leaking in the boggy tangle of their vines,
apples bruising in their bins,
the half-Harvest Moon itself
a tipped snifter—
I incline my chin.

—Richard Kenney

He tried twice, and Elizabeth at the exchange said, "I got you on the list, Clarence. I'll ring you. You're still tenth."

"What's taking them so long?"

"Oh, you know."

People at this end were calling people at that end, and the other end didn't know any more than they did. He tried a third time, and there was Art Diener on the party line with his son-in-law in St. Paul, saying, "How does it look down there?" "Looks pretty bad." "So what do you think?" "Hard to say." "I guess we'll have to wait and see." "I think that's all we can do." "Well, let us know." "Okay." It's in critical situations such as this that the telephone is supposed to be such an advance in communications, but what's there to say? "What's it doing down there?" "Snowing." "Yeah, same here."

"You'd think these people weren't *from* here!" Clarence said to Arlene. "You'd think they never *saw* winter before!"

Hjalmar and Virginia Ingqvist's oldest, Mrs. Keith (Christine) St. Clair, called them from Los Angeles at noon (10 A.M., PST) to say, "I can't believe it! I'm so excited! We'll be there in just a few hours! I can't wait! No, there's nothing wrong. Why? No, I just called to say hi. Good-bye," and then she and her orthodontist husband and the three children flew to Minnesota in three hours. Amazing. You leave California, have two glasses of champagne and eat lunch, and the next thing you know you're back in the old North Star State. Except they weren't. They were in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Traffic at Minneapolis-St. Paul was backed up with only one runway open. A few hours later they were still in Sioux Falls, on their sixth cup of vending-machine coffee apiece, and the children were sick of Space Invaders and were draped on their parents and aiming sharp kicks at each other. A few hours after that they were in Minnesota (though from the look of the airline terminal it could've been anywhere in America), and a few hours after *that* they left the airport on a bus heading for downtown Minneapolis. An hour later they were almost downtown. Up in the air it was the twentieth century, but in the blizzard on the ground it was the Middle Ages. Peasants trudged along the road, their heads down, or struggled to free their ox carts from the mire, lacking only oxen to do it. Their sheer bulk in the heavy clothing made the people look like beasts. A bearded man got on the bus. He was immense. His feet were like clubfeet in two moon boots, and his giant leather paws hung at his side. In the dimness his fur cap appeared to be his own matted hair, on a head shaped like a gorilla's. His breath and spit were frozen on his hairy face. He smelled of wet fur. Christine turned away. He looked as if he had emerged from a cave where he had spent the ages since Bronze eating half-cooked mastodon and grunting to his women. Christine was cold. She wore a thin London Fog raincoat over her pink shirt and blue jeans. Her feet were wet, in brown loafers. "Put your arm around me," she told Keith. He grunted and put his arm around her. "If I had known it was going to be like this—" she said.

In 1887 her great-grandfather Sveeggen, a boy of twelve, was lost in a blizzard between the house and the barn, where he'd gone to do chores. His family had gone to town; he was the oldest of six children. He looked out the barn door into the wind and was sure he saw a ghostly mass of house and black roof ahead, so he plunged into the blizzard and was blinded by white light and everything disappeared, house and barn behind him. He counted twenty, thirty, forty, fifty steps, trying to walk straight into the wind, then turned left, took thirty steps. Then right. And turned back, and knew he was lost and would die—and then the house caught fire. He saw the dull orange glow and walked toward it and stood by the back steps as flames shot out the roof and it all collapsed—he was cold on one side, burning hot on the other—and got his bearings straight and ran into the blizzard and ran smack into the side of the barn. He spent the night lying next to the cow, Tina, holding his broken nose. It was the great experience of his life, which he never forgot. "*Hvor er Gud Fader mild, vi alle var fordervet i synd.*" (How kind is God the Father, we were all lost in sin.) Having lost his life, he entered the new one with a sweet disposition. He planted trees, raised cattle, married and had seven children, and seldom spoke a harsh word. His nose was never set. He pitched ten tons of hay the day he was married; in the wedding picture he sits, smiling, his eyes bright beside his ruined beak, a man who took a hard wallop and now everything is easy for him.

In Minneapolis a fleet of orange snowplows and salt trucks moved out of the city truck yard at 3 A.M. Thanksgiving morning. The snow had stopped and the wind let up. State plows were out on the highways, a string of flashing blue lights moved north on I-94 from downtown along the river. The city crews started downtown, clearing the streets and salting them and loading snow into dump trucks. When Christine stirred, at seven, Sixth Street was black and dry in front of the Dyckman Hotel, though she didn't know it. On the bedside table was a card advertising the Thanksgiving buffet at the Dyckman's Chateau de Paris restaurant. A happy family sat at a gleaming table admiring the huge turkey as a friendly waiter hovered overhead. The tablecloth was snowy white, no spills. The children were handsome and beautifully dressed. Candles glowed. All you could eat for \$12.95. Wine from the Chateau cellar. Flaming desserts. Arturo and His Boulevard Violins. Keith and the children were asleep. Christine eased out of bed and into the bathroom and ran a hot bath. A telephone hung on the wall. She called home. "It doesn't look like we'll make it," she said. "It looks like we'll be up on Friday."

She called Chip in St. Paul and Corinne in Edina, and they both said, Fine, dinner at the hotel sounded good. Meet at ten for brunch, take a walk, go to a movie, eat dinner at five. That was the plan until the others drove downtown and noticed that the streets were really in pretty good shape. They had gone to bed hearing dire warnings on WCCO—"No travel advised"—and woke up to hear "No

unnecessary travel advised," but now WCCO, the Good Neighbor to the Great Northwest, was sounding less dogmatic about it, and Charlie Johnson was taking calls on *Party Line* from listeners who advanced their own views of weather conditions, more liberal than the official line. "How does it look out there?" he asked. "Not so bad, Charlie. Pretty good. Wind's died down and the plow went by about an hour ago." He pointed out that the weather bureau still advised no unnecessary travel. "Well, she looks pretty good here," they said. "I think we're going to go."

The Ingqvist children met in the hotel lobby at ten and decided they would feel bad spending Thanksgiving there with the roads looking good. Corinne said, "The folks listen to 'CCO. They'd never say so, but they'd feel just terrible if they knew that we could've come and just didn't. You know Mom. She's crazy about holidays. I'll bet she's got the turkey in the oven already and she's already got her pies out of the freezer."

"Think we should call?" Keith asked.

"Naw," said Chip. "Let's surprise them."

As it turned out, Virginia did have her pies out of the freezer, but they were Swanson's frozen chicken pot pies. At one o'clock she was sliding them into a 450-degree oven when Hjalmar yelled, "Guess what?"

She had no idea. Something on television?

"They're here."

"Who? Is this a joke?" Then she heard them coming through the door. It was them, all right. The grandchildren tore in, and there were coats to be taken off and boots, and hugs and kisses all around, and in all the pandemonium it took the children a while to notice that something was different. The house smelled different. It didn't smell like Thanksgiving; it smelled like room freshener.

Christine went back to the kitchen to help her mother make coffee. She said, "Were you thinking we wouldn't make it?" Her mother ran water in the teakettle and got the coffee down from the cupboard. "You know," she said, "there's a recipe for macaroni and cheese I've always been meaning to try. It's the one where you boil up about three pounds of macaroni and then you grate cheese on it. It only takes about ten minutes."

THE PHONE SITS ON THE KITCHEN COUNTER, AND before I dial the number, I wash all the dishes in the sink, as a sort of token, so this kitchen will look more like theirs, and I turn off the light. Eight digits, a six-second delay, and a clunk, then the hard burr of the country telephone. My call follows a trunk route north to St. Cloud, then north and west, takes a sharp turn alongside a narrow oiled road, and there it enters a system that my late grandfather built, which is where the call clunks. You can tell the weather up there by the sound of it: more metallic in cold weather, like a tire hitting a bump in hot weather, and of course static during a thunderstorm.

My grandfather was the leading light of the Lake Wobegon Rural Telephone Cooperative, its first president, the



man who signed up investors and walked the fencerows and dug holes for the posts. The first ones stood about eight feet tall, the wire hung on a bent nail. They had telephones in town long before, of course—the Ingqvist twins, who lived for innovation, had the first, a line to their mother's, in 1894—but it took my grandfather to convince the good country people that the phone was more than a toy. He was a tall, handsome, godly man, and so admired that when the preacher at his funeral chose the text "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God," his neighbors considered it an insult. One cold day his chimney caught on fire and his house burned to the ground, and as he stood raking the coals in the cellar, he thought about telephones. He was not a man to take suffering as God's judgment if a remedy was close at hand. In 1921 he rebuilt the house (without a fireplace), organized the phone company, and drew up a contract between the township and the Lake Wobegon volunteer fire brigade. In the same year he bought a Model T, his first car, and gave an acre of pasture for a township cemetery.

The rural co-op merged with the town company in 1933, and a pupil in Grandpa's Sunday-school class who worshipped the ground he walked on has been running it from her pantry since 1942—Elizabeth, who was my Sunday-school teacher for many years. When she was a child, Grandpa took her along when he walked the phone line in the spring, checking for loose or leaning posts and also watching for hummingbirds and picking purple lilac blossoms and a toad or two. "He never went anywhere without

a child in tow," she says. "He had seven of his own, but if those weren't available, he'd shop around until he found another. He might be driving to town for a bag of nails he wanted for roofing, but he still needed that child to ride with him—he'd come pull you out of school if he had to."

The pantry off her kitchen holds the old switchboard, still in good condition, and also the steel cabinet with the switching equipment that took over from it when they went to dial telephones in 1960, but she keeps on top of things just the same. If someone doesn't answer their phone by the fifth ring, she does, and usually she knows where they went and when they're expected, so many customers don't bother dialing in-town calls, they just dial 0 and she puts them through. If you do reach her instead of your party—say, your mother—she may clue you in on things your mom would never tell you, about your mom's bad back, a little fall on the steps the week before, or the approach of Mother's Day, or the fact that when you were born you were shown off like you were the Prince of Wales. A few customers accuse Elizabeth of listening in and claim they know the click that means she's there, but it isn't a click, it's an echoey sound, as if you and your party had moved into a bigger room. It's a wonder that she keeps track of us so faithfully, what with her age and arthritis and her great weight. She suffers from a glandular condition and is pushing three hundred pounds. Nowadays five rings is as quick as she can make it to the phone, even from her kitchen table.

When I talk to her, I don't always hear an old fat lady;

sometimes I hear the girl who walked the line with Grandpa in the spring of '21. I am a person she bawls out on a regular basis, and when I call home and the phone rings and rings, I brace myself for her "Yes?" and "Oh. It's you" and "I don't know if I care to talk to you or not" and then the lecture. I have disappointed my friend so many times. I live far away, but news of my sins travels fast and she always finds out. She found out when I flunked out of college. And then when I got a divorce—the worst, in her book, and for almost a year afterward she cried on the phone when I called. Many times she has told me, "I just thank God that your grandfather is dead and not around to see you now." And yet, if I ask her about him, she is always ready to change the subject, a sort of forgiveness. I simply say, "Is it true that you used to go with him when he walked the phone line?" and she says, "You *know* I did. Heavens. I've told you that a hundred times," but she's willing to tell it once more, and then it's spring, the sweet song of the rosebreasted grosbeak drifts from the wood tinged with green across the young alfalfa, the bumblebees buzz, the toads sing in the ditch, my tall handsome grandfather with the sharp blue eyes and brush moustache ambles along the bank above the road looking for the first rhubarb, the little girl scrambling to keep up.

"To me, there wasn't a thing he didn't know. Every flower, every tree. Every living thing, he just cared about it all and he expected you to care, and so of course you did. He talked to you like you were smart and would want to know these things, what bird that is and, here, this is a jack-in-the-pulpit and—the *names* of things, that everything has a name. That isn't a 'bush' over there, those are *chokecherries*, birds eat them, we make jelly from them. I don't think that man was ever bored in his life unless he was sick in bed. After my father died of diphtheria, when I was five years old, I always looked on him as my father, and I used to stay up to his house with your aunts and uncles when my mother would go to Iowa to see her relatives, and once I remember—it was January and *bitter* cold—he woke up all us children in the middle of the night and told us to get dressed. Well, we did. We didn't ask any questions, we just got bundled up, and he led us out through the yard and up the path into the woods, eight children—your Aunt Flo was only four, I believe, and I helped carry her—in the *dark*, no lantern, mind you, just the moon, the coldest night of the year, and none of us was a bit afraid, because he was there. Not even when we came to the edge of the trees and looked up and there on the top of the hill was a wolf. He sat on the snowbank and looked at us. He was pure silver. He didn't move a muscle. In the moonlight he looked like a ghost. Your grandpa knelt down and put his arms around us and said, 'I want you to take a good look and remember this, because you may never get to see it again.' So we looked good. I can still remember it like I'm looking at it right now. I can see that wolf and I can feel his arm around me."

When I talk to her, I often feel I'm talking to my grandfather, who died before I was born, and I try not to hold

back the truth, even when the news is so bad it almost breaks her heart. There is some dignity to this, though the truth is not easy. When her nephew Wesley was replacing some shingles on her roof, he put his foot on the main phone trunk line to steady himself and snapped it off and then figured if he didn't mention it, just tied the line to the gutter, maybe no one would notice, maybe it would get better on its own. So the phones were out for five hours, and when Bud found the break, Wesley said, "Oh, yeah, I saw that—I was sort of wondering what it was."

When I look at the lines I've busted, I don't sort of wonder about them, I know what I did, I know they didn't fall off the side of the house because they were tired. Still, it's not easy to say what you've done and not write up a better version.

I CAN SEE HOW I COULD WRITE A BOLD ACCOUNT OF MYSELF as a passionate man who rose from humble beginnings to cut a wide swath in the world, whose crimes along the way might be written off to extravagance and love and art, and could even almost believe some of it myself on certain days after the sun went down if I'd had a snort or two and was in Los Angeles and it was February and I was twenty-four, but I find a truer account in the *Herald-Star*, where it says:

Mr. Gary Keillor visited at the home of Al and Florence Crandall on Monday and after lunch returned to St. Paul where he is currently employed in the radio show business. Mr. Lew Powell also visited, who recently celebrated his ninety-third birthday and is enjoying excellent health. Almost twelve quarts of string beans were picked and some strawberries. Lunch was fried chicken with gravy and creamed peas.

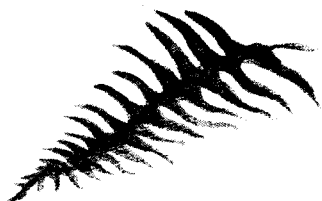
The newspaper's correspondent on the scene was Aunt Flo herself, and the careful reader can see that she still dotes on her wayward nephew, pointing out his gainful and glamorous employment and suggesting that he is no slouch on a bean row either, giving a little plug for family longevity, and complimenting the guests with a good lunch. Aunt Flo does not make her famous fried chicken for any old shirttail relative who comes in off the road.

It's my first appearance in the paper in several years, and though it leaves out so much that one might want to add, about travels, awards, publications, it leaves out even more that one is glad not to see, about pride, gluttony, lust, and leaves me feeling better about home journalism. The story is accurate, as I read it, and everything is there: the sun beating down on us in the beanfield, the elderly gent sampling the berry crop, the goodness of creamed peas and of poultry allowed a free and happy life and then rolled in flour and pan-fried, the goodness of Uncle Al, who said, "You remind me so much of your grandfather." He was referring not to my life or character but to a similarity of moustache. A small compliment, and it pleased me for days afterward, and I read as much into it as I possibly could. □

*A small army of
hunters struggles to control one
of Hawaii's most destructive exotic pests*

THE PIG WAR

BY KENNETH BROWER



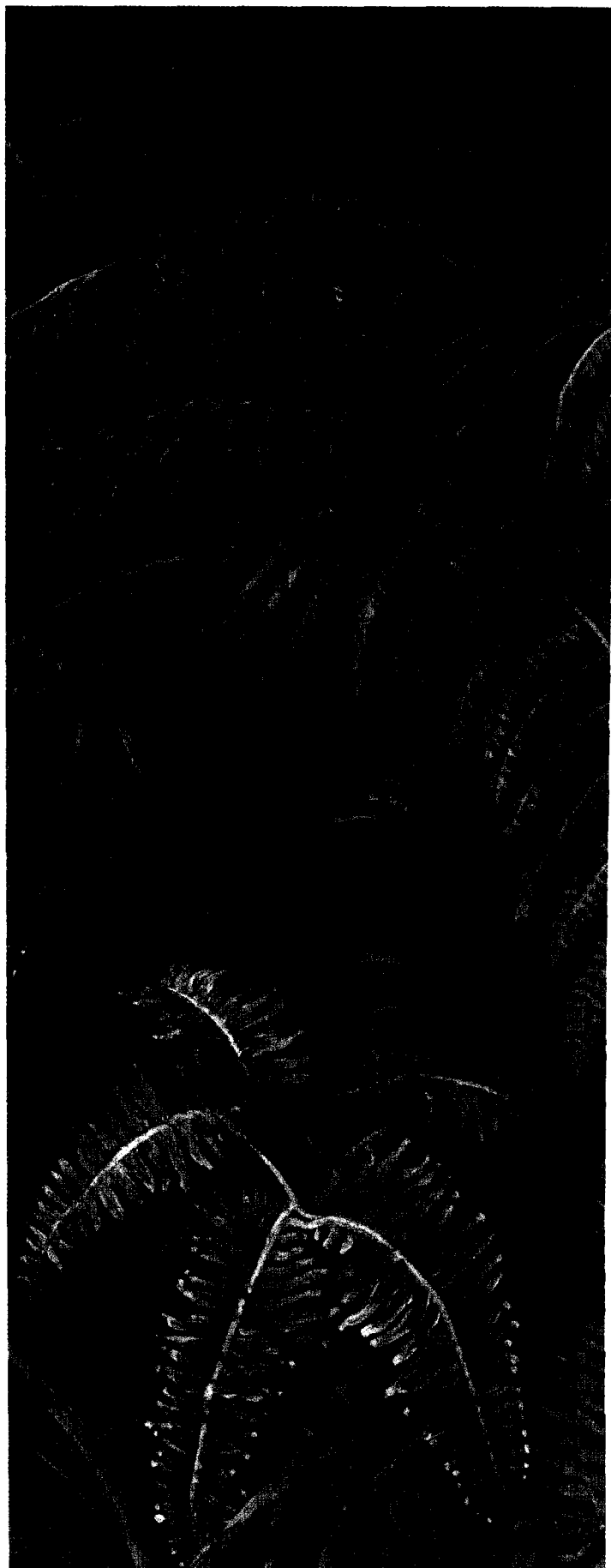
TWO MILES INTO THE TREE-FERN FOREST OF 'OLA'A Tract, Dan Taylor pulled the jeep onto a grassy shoulder of the road. The macadam ran on straight and narrow, bisecting the spring-green wilderness of fronds. The hapu'u, the tree ferns, made a secondary canopy under a thin, much-broken primary canopy of ohia-lehua. The secondary canopy here was continuous and much more impressive than the first. It was as if some sparse Serengeti had germinated atop Amazonian jungle. In the structure of their fronds, in the dark little dots of sori on the undersides, the hapu'u looked similar to any number of fern species on the mainland, but they were much larger. The hapu'u canopy formed twenty to thirty feet above the ground. Ahead the straightness of the road wavered in the heat and the far fronds trembled, as scenery might around a time machine building up steam. We had left the twentieth century, the Big Island, and Hawaii Volcanoes National Park. We had taken a chronological wrong turn, a detour into the Paleozoic.

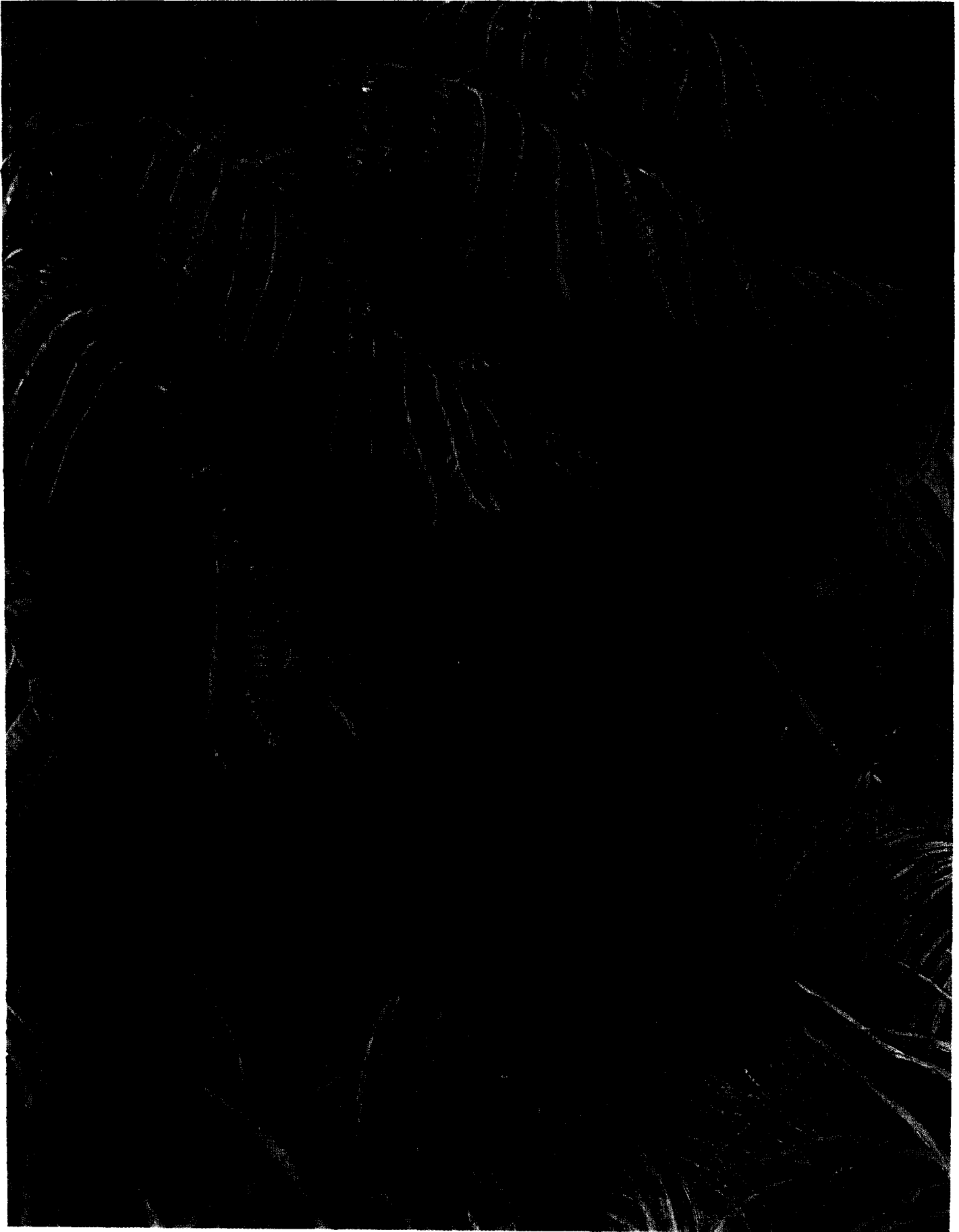
On the left-hand side of the road, behind the wire fence, Taylor told me, was tree-fern forest from which feral pigs had been eliminated. On the right was forest where pigs still rooted and rambled. He led me into the right-hand forest first.

The light under the canopy was cool and green. The air was humid, the breeze stilled, the mood carboniferous. Overhead, the backlit fronds interdigitated with few gaps between, making a green tent of chlorophyll, but underfoot the forest floor was broken by black, muddy trails and turnpikes. Here and there the mud was firm enough to hold the impression of a cloven hoof.

Taylor picked one of these trails and proceeded down it. Daniel Taylor is a career man with the U.S. Park Service, a general in a war against the pigs. He is a fair-skinned, soft-

Kenneth Brower has written often for The Atlantic and is at work on a book about the open ocean off Hawaii.





spoken man of middle age and height, his features pleasantly weathered by a lifetime in the field. He came to Hawaii Island in 1979, from a post in Glacier National Park. Before that he worked in the North Cascades, and before that in Yosemite and Sequoia. Today he wore his uniform slacks and a pair of lightweight boots. I was barefoot, and the black mud of the pig trail felt wonderful between my toes. In this matter, at least, I could empathize with the enemy.

"*Rubus ellipticus*, introduced raspberry," Taylor announced, fetching a vine and bending it toward me. He gave me a significant glance. Moving several steps on, we stopped before another vine. "*Passiflora mollissima*, passionflower. Banana-poka, in Hawaiian. It's South American, a minor constituent of the flora in Colombia, Bolivia, but here . . . It was introduced in 1952 by an imbecile. I can't remember his name. *Passiflora edulis* is the passion-fruit humans generally eat, but pigs like *mollissima*. They love the fruit. They eat it, defecate, and spread the seeds. The vine goes up into the canopy and spreads." Over-spreading the ferns, the vine stole the sunlight and took over the forest.

We walked a few dozen yards and then, beside a fallen tree-fern trunk, Taylor went down on one knee.

"See? This is a banana-poka seedling. A whole bunch of them—" The clump of seedlings made a perfect circle on the wet blackness at the side of the trail. "—eight, nine, ten, eleven . . . eighteen," Taylor said, counting the legacy of that particular pig. Without rising, he leaned out to brush another circle of seedlings. The seedlings of this second clump were much smaller, having just broken the surface. "Here's another generation. Eight, nine, ten . . . There goes the forest."

We walked on, Taylor sensibly avoiding the muddiest places and I, barefoot, looking forward to them and squishing through the deepest parts.

"We're looking desperately for a biological control," Taylor said. "Right now a forester is working in Colombia and Bolivia, searching for one. But for the moment there's not a damn thing we can do. I think this forest is doomed."

We left the doomed forest and crossed to the other side of the road.

Inside the pigless forest the fronds overhead interdigitated flawlessly, leaving no breaks in the canopy. Where across the road the light had been cool and green, here it was cooler and greener. The going was slow, because pigs had not opened up avenues. Recumbent trunks and aerial roots were everywhere, and making progress into the forest was like trying to run a race over hurdles still stacked against the stadium wall.

At intervals among the trunks of the tree ferns were trunks of ohia-lehua, which ran up through the canopy to leaf somewhere out of sight above. Occasionally one of the ohia stood on stilts.

The ohia, a Polynesian myrtle, often begins life as an epiphyte on tree ferns, germinating on the fern stumps or high on the trunks, sometimes twenty feet or more

above the ground. As a trunk-germinated ohia tree grows, its roots begin to search for the ground, entwining their host. The tree fern, like a slender lifeguard who has rescued a desperate matron more vital than himself, begins to strangle. By the time the ohia's frantic roots have found solid bottom, the fern has gasped its last, decayed, and disappeared, and the ohia is left standing on stilts. The surrounding tree ferns hurry to fill in the void left by their fallen comrade—the tree fern's mission is to make a green heaven on earth—and soon the secondary canopy is complete again.

Taylor and I stopped and stood quiet for a moment, letting the silence of the forest sink in. It was a closer, deeper silence than the silence across the way. The effect of the green light was powerful and nearly instantaneous. It put a part of the brain to sleep, that region concerned with projects, ambitions, worry, war, death, taxes. It awakened another part, the region concerned with things less easy to name: listening, waiting, half-surmise.

"The key to this forest is the integrity of the tree-fern canopy," Taylor said, perhaps having decided that the green light had primed me sufficiently. "If you look twenty feet above your head, you can see that the tree-fern fronds interlock, forming a subcanopy. The woody canopy above is very open, broken, not contiguous. What really keeps the forest closed is that tree-fern subcanopy twenty feet or so above the ground.

"The canopy does a lot of things. It keeps the sunlight from penetrating directly to the forest floor, except in a very few places—and there for only a few minutes during the day. That keeps the temperatures down, keeps them more even, and maintains a more predictable environment for plants. The humidity is higher than in the forest across the street. The canopy breaks up the impact of raindrops. These big tropical raindrops don't impact the forest floor directly. What falls down here is a kind of mist. Atomized raindrops.

"When tree ferns fall down, as they naturally do, they try to grow like this one here." He pointed to the green python of a recumbent trunk lying at our feet. "You see how this main stem runs along the ground, then suddenly takes a right angle and grows up over there? Well, that's the way tree ferns regenerate. When pigs are present, and that tree-fern stem is lying on the ground, the pigs will come along and munch on it. They like to chew the starchy interior of the stem. It's a favorite food item with them.

"That chewing does a couple of things. It kills the tree fern, to begin with, so there goes the canopy. The pigs also leave a hollow behind when they've chewed on the stem, a trough in which water collects, and the water breeds mosquitoes. Mosquitoes are not native here, nor is the avian malaria that they carry. The native bird population doesn't tolerate the malaria very well. Introduced birds do better. We think one of the major causes, if not *the* major cause, of the decline of native forest birds is avian malaria. Pigs are implicated in that as well."

A GENERATION AGO HAWAIIAN COWBOYS, RIDING BY A certain burial site in the northern grasslands of the Big Island, were in the habit of reining in, dismounting, and urinating on the grave. Buried here was "Mongoose" Forbes. In the 1870s Forbes sold mongooses to the managers of Hawaii's sugar plantations, on the grounds that this import from Asia would eat rats. (Norway rats had jumped ship in Hawaii and were raising Cain in the cane.) The disrespectful posthumous salute by the Hawaiian cowboys would have mystified Forbes. Like most of those men who have introduced alien animals to islands, Mongoose Forbes thought he was doing good.

Exotic wildlife wreaks plenty of havoc on the continents—starlings, sparrows, camels, and carp on our own, for example—but nowhere have exotics caused more devastation and disruption than in the simple, sheltered ecosystems of islands. Isolation from the rough-and-tumble of natural selection, mainland style, has allowed islands to develop a wonderful, often bizarre, flowering of forms. In Australia—a continent, actually, but so isolated that the island principle applies—marsupials filled all the mammal niches: marsupial bears, marsupial wolves, marsupial rhinoceroses. In the Galápagos Islands finches speciated to fill a wide range of avian niches, and giant lizards went to sea to play otter. Isolation makes islands into fine natural laboratories for scientists like Darwin, and islands have given rise to some elegant theories; but isolation also makes for vulnerability. In Australia the marsupials and the monotremes, the two most primitive mammalian orders, were living in a fool's paradise. On continents across the sea the placenta had been invented and had spread; evolution had passed Australia by and Australia never knew it. The marsupial wolf had a terrible shock when, for the first time, it saw a real canine face-to-face. For many insular species the first encounter with the outside world has been followed shortly by extinction.

The new arrivals have the power to alter the very landscape. Real rabbits, replacing the marsupial kind, accomplished that by desertifying vast stretches of Australia. The placental rabbit, with its enormous reproductive potential and its quicker wit, was a ninety-year plague on that island-continent. In one year, 1887, twenty-eight years into the plague, nearly 20 million rabbits were killed by the desperate inhabitants of New South Wales alone. Earlier the "European" rabbit, moving north from its native North Africa, had overrun Corsica, Sardinia, and the British Isles. Later it would overrun New Zealand and the San Juans, in Puget Sound. In 1903, during the Australian plague, some genius introduced the rabbit to Laysan Island, in Hawaii's leeward chain, and Laysan was promptly reduced to desert; of twenty-six native plants known in 1923 only four remained.

I didn't plan it this way, but my career has often deposited me on islands. The problem of exotic introductions to island environments is one that has grown on me. On Maui, across the channel from the Big Island, I have braked time and again for mongooses gliding across the

road. My instincts were wrong—I should have accelerated. Some of those mongooses were out hunting rats, as Mongoose Forbes had intended, but more were out after native birds and their eggs. (Hawaii's avifauna, thanks to pigs, cattle, mongooses, mosquitoes, and men, has suffered the highest extinction rate of any avifauna on this planet. In the past few centuries approximately 40 percent of Hawaii's known native bird species have become extinct. On the current list of rare and endangered birds thirty of the sixty-seven species found in the United States were Hawaiian. The Hawaiian goose, the Hawaiian duck, the Hawaiian coot, hawk, thrush, stilt, and crow—among others—are in imminent danger of joining the Hawaiian rail, last collected near the rain forest in 1864; the greater and lesser koa finches, not seen since 1896; the greater 'amakihi, not seen since early in this century; the kioea, the ula-ai-hawane, the mamo, the black mamo, and dozens of others that have passed into oblivion.)

In the Galápagos Islands I have tracked herds of feral goats that compete for forage with the giant tortoises for which that archipelago is named. From hotel windows in Britain I have drawn imaginary beads on the American gray squirrels that have overrun that island, displacing the smaller native red squirrels, barking and girdling thousands of good English hardwoods, and sorely testing the patience of the natives, that most animal-loving of peoples. In the Palau Archipelago of Micronesia, venturing out on dawn walks, I have passed armies of giant African snails headed the other way, crawling back to the bushes after their nightly depredations.

The giant African snail, *Achatina fulica*, grows nearly to the size of a football and can weigh more than a pound. Introduced from Madagascar, where it is native, to the smaller island of Mauritius, to the east, it quickly became a serious pest in cotton fields. In 1847 an English traveler, W. H. Benson, saw the snails on Mauritius and took a few along with him to India. (Mauritius, it happens, was home of the dodo, type specimen for extinct island animals everywhere. The gargantuan snail can be seen as the Dodo's Revenge.) Benson's snails multiplied prodigiously in India, as populations tend to do there. By 1900 the snail was in Ceylon, eating cocoa; next it was in Malaya, eating rubber trees. From its new centers of dispersal it made slow, slimy, but steady progress outward, eating melons, legumes, rice, rat poison—upon which it thrived—and the lime from any whitewashed walls and fences that stood in its way. It was introduced to the Micronesian islands by the Japanese, who considered the snail a delicacy.

In the Palau Islands once, as an experiment, I tried feeding the huge African snails to the native estuarine crocodiles that were confined to cages on the lawn of the small biology laboratory where I worked and lived. The trouble with exotic arrivals on islands, I knew, is that few natural predators lie waiting for them. Nothing could be more naturally predatory, I thought, than a twelve-foot croc. The crocodiles rudely took the experimental snails

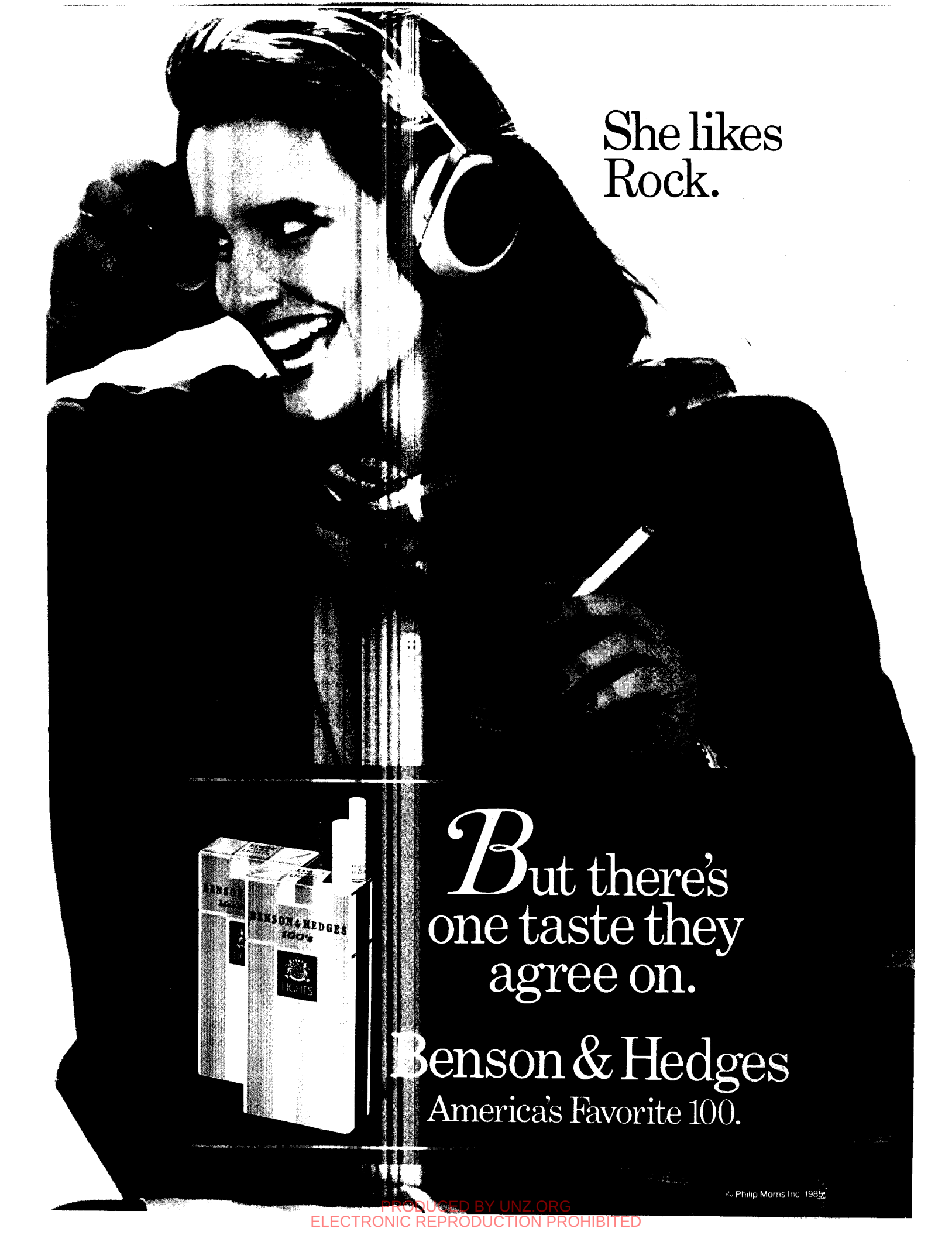
He likes
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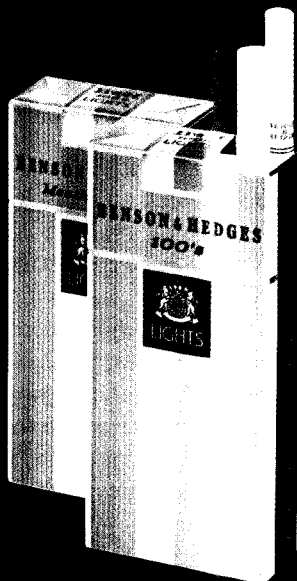
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from my hand through the heavy mesh. Crocodiles can be very fast when they want to be, and one small croc lacerated my finger against the cage before I realized its head had moved. Each crocodile, having taken the shell, invariably fumbled and dropped it. I think the crocodiles expected a whole arm, not just this calcareous thing the hand was holding. The reptile would then retrieve the snail, which clinked like a fifty-caliber shell casing against its teeth. Suddenly deft, the crocodile tossed and shifted the snail backward down its snaggy row of teeth toward the fulcrum at the corner of its jaw. It clamped down, cracked the shell, swallowed. After two or three snails, unfortunately, the dim reptilian brain came to realize it did not care for escargots, and each crocodile lost interest.

My crocodile results were typical. Those who have followed men like Mongoose Forbes and "Snail" Benson—as that shortsighted Englishman might have been called—and "Starling" Scheiffelin and "Mynah" Hillebrand seldom have much luck undoing the deeds of those notorious tinkers. In their unnatural contexts exotic pests seem to possess an unnatural vitality. Before coming to Hawaii I had witnessed only one campaign—the program to control the coconut rhinoceros beetle in Micronesia—in which man seemed to be winning.

In Hawaii Volcanoes National Park the most destructive of exotic pests is the pig. It is estimated that four thousand feral pigs live in the park, foraging 25 percent of its territory, or 60,000 acres. The damage they do is difficult to quantify—pigs have been loose in Hawaii for centuries, and no pre-pig baseline data exist—but in 1968 the Park Service gave quantification a try, setting up an enclosure in the fern forest near Thurston Lava Tube. Pigs were fenced out from the enclosure's 900 square meters of ohia trees and hapu'u and *Sadleria* ferns. Thirteen years later, plots inside and outside the enclosure were sampled and compared. Where pigs had roamed freely, Park Service researchers found a more abundant cover of exotic grasses and herbs, a greater number of exotic plant species, more exposed soil, and more exposed roots. Inside the enclosure they found more native plant species, fewer exotics, less exposed soil, and fewer exposed roots. The enclosure experiment confirmed the intuitions of anyone who spends much time in the Hawaiian backcountry. The enclosure had become a small, ferny, atavistic island drifting back toward the flora of old Hawaii. Around it, sharky with pigs, was a sea drifting the other way, toward pauperization, bastardization, and desert.

It seemed to me now, standing in the 'Ola'a tree ferns with Dan Taylor, that the most cosmopolitan of the alien animals I had seen on islands was the pig. I remembered stumbling into the sandy bowls that feral pigs excavate in Galápagos beaches as they snout out the nests of sea turtles. I recalled the small deserts I had seen pigs make in the jungle around the stilted longhouses of Iban tribesmen on Borneo, and the feral-pig damage I had observed in the palmettos of the Sea Islands of Georgia. I decided that in the war against the pigs I would throw in on Taylor's side.

IN THE JEEP AGAIN, TAYLOR MADE A U-TURN, AND WE retreated from our detour into the Paleozoic of 'Ola'a. We left the tree ferns behind, passed out of Kilauea Volcano's rainy zone, and drove southward into the lava desert of the Chain of Craters Road. Zonation on islands is often radically abbreviated, and it was so here—a ten-minute drive brought us into entirely different country. If the 'Ola'a ferns belonged to the Paleozoic, then this new terrain belonged to some Archeozoic age of vulcanism or to some dry and blasted age of our future. We passed through the small, black lithic sea of the 1969 lava flow, pushed up at regular intervals into small buttes. The buttes were tree molds. Inside each one were the remnants of an ohia that the lava had flowed over. We passed the pit craters for which the road is named: Devil's Throat, Hi'iaka Crater, Puhimau Crater. The feral pig, versatile animal, lives in this country, too.

Taylor pulled the jeep off the road onto a cindery shoulder. On the eastern side of the pavement was Puhimau Crater. On the western side was a thermal area of whitened ohia snags and steamy ground—a pit crater in the process of becoming, some vulcanologists believe. On the crater side was a pig fence. Taylor, climbing down from the jeep, bent to tug at the lowermost wire.

"The bottom wire is real tight—they can't root under it," he said. "If they do start to root, we know it right away, because we walk the fence every two weeks on inspections. We pull trees off the wire and fix breaks. Pigs are fast but not particularly agile. They aren't good jumpers. The fence is only thirty-two inches high, but that's enough."

The fence ran to the edge of Puhimau Crater, incorporating that natural feature as part of the pig barrier, and then resumed on the other side. The pigs within this Puhimau Unit, fenced off from the rest of their kind, were under almost daily attack by Park Service hunters and dogs.

"Pigs were introduced two hundred years ago or more," Taylor said. "So a lot of people here think of pigs as native animals. They don't understand why we are trying to control them. The school system lets us down badly. The local schools don't teach Hawaiian natural history. We have a huge education effort at hand. We've got to manage the resource and educate people as to why. There's a lot of misunderstanding on why we manage the park as we do. We're tolerated by most people, understood by a few, disliked by some. Recreational pig hunters—the Hawaiians who hunt for meat—are the most hostile."

I considered for a moment the hypothesis that those hunters were right. Perhaps the native ecosystem was so shattered that any attempt at reconstruction was foolish. Better, maybe, to pretend that pigs and passionflowers were native, to let them achieve some new balance, and start managing from there.

"It's been two centuries now," I suggested. "Is there anything like a new equilibrium?"

Taylor shook his head. "The system has not begun to accommodate these organisms."

As we walked back to the jeep, Taylor nodded toward the roadside. "You see the lighter-colored green in there?" I did. Among the drab, desert greens of scrub ohia and pu-kiawe were clumps of a paler green. "Sandalwood," Taylor said.

I knew something of the story of sandalwood: discovered by Captain Cook in 1778; commercialized by Captain Kendrick in 1791; worth eight to ten dollars a *picul* in China, where the fragrant, close-grained heartwood was made into incense, carvings, and cabinetwork; nearly extinct by 1886, when the logging ceased. A *picul*, about 133 pounds, was the load that a Hawaiian was supposed to be able to carry from the woods. King Kamehameha financed his conquest of the Hawaiian Archipelago largely by the sale of sandalwood in Canton. I had written all this up once, but I had never seen the actual tree.

"Goats," Taylor explained. "There used to be a lot of them in here. Since we eliminated the goats here, the sandalwoods are just bouncing back."

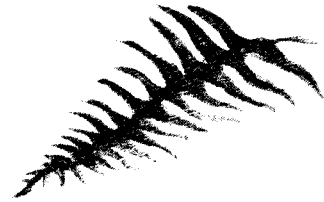
The war against feral goats preceded the war against the pigs, and the rangers learned many of the rules of animal warfare in that earlier effort. The goat, *Capra hircus*, was probably introduced to Hawaii Island by Captain Cook in 1778, in the vicinity of Kealekekua Bay, on the western shore, and it quickly spread over the entire island. In the 1920s control efforts began in Hawaii Volcanoes National Park. Between 1927 and 1970, 70,000 goats were killed in the park by deputized hunters, rangers, foresters, Civilian Conservation Corps personnel under ranger supervision, and "goat-control companies" of professional hunters. In 1970 an aerial census showed about 15,000 goats left in the park—approximately the same number estimated to have been there when the goat-control efforts had begun, half a century before. The goat campaigns had been ragtag, intermittent, almost recreational, much like unsuccessful goat campaigns I had witnessed in the Galápagos. The campaigns in Hawaii had also failed. The remarkable randiness and the high reproductive potential of *Capra hircus* had overcome every one of them.

After that 1970 census the Park Service declared war. Park planners devised a long-range strategy: goatproof boundary fences, internal drift fences, frequent drives, organized hunts, a vegetation-monitoring program to measure the success or failure of their efforts. Between 1971 and 1975, 12,976 goats were killed. *Capra hircus* became hard to find in the park. The citizen hunters participating in the program lost interest and dropped out, but Park Service riflemen continued, searching in helicopters—goat gunships—or on horseback, with dogs. Between 1976 and 1979, 1,596 more goats were killed. By 1980 goats had been fenced out of 90 percent of their former range and only about 200 remained in the park.

The surviving goats proved the hardest to eliminate, predictably, and the Park Service experimented with new methods to get rid of them. The last and perhaps cleverest was the old Judas-goat trick, updated. Radio collars were attached to captured goats, which were then released.

Goats are not fond of solitude, and each Judas goat invariably joined up with a herd of its fellows. The rangers homed in on the beep of his signal. Today fewer than half a dozen goats hold out in the park.

Sitting in the jeep, Dan Taylor waved in the direction of Puhimau Crater. The Park Service had begun experimenting with radio collars on pigs, too, he said. Out there somewhere, in the Puhimau Unit, a sow was beeping. This was the first reference I heard to the animal called the Electric Pig.



BOBBY MATTOS, ONE OF THE PARK'S SIX FULL-TIME hunters, sat at a desk writing up his report. Behind him a huge map of the park—a battle map, divided into hunting units—covered the wall. Mattos had just returned from a day's hunt in the Puhimau Unit. He was sweaty and dirty, and his T-shirt was torn. The hunter is of Portuguese ancestry, lean, brown, and in his mid-twenties. His short beard had once been trimmed along the jawline, but the shaved part had since gone stubbly. He is handsome in a failed-bullfighter, Mexican-bandit sort of way. He looked rough—he was a professional cutter of throats—but his smile on greeting Taylor was shy. He told the boss that the dogs had bumped into the Electric Pig that day. They had missed her, once again, but later had caught a boar. He moved to the map, and his finger made a circle inside the Puhimau border.

"The dogs worked this area real good, but there were no hookups. So we went down the Sow Trail. It's a trail they always use from the bottom up. They got a main highway going up and down. Soon as we reached down, we started hitting some t'ick undergrowth, and the dogs started to go crazy. This is where they caught him. We couldn't see nothin'. Had to go crawling underneath to go get him."

(The Sow Trail is named for a predecessor of the Electric Pig. This sow, like the Electric Pig, was one of six feral pigs trapped, fitted with radio collars, and released in the Puhimau Unit. The sow of Sow Trail was considerably less ingenious than the Electric Pig. Her invariable habit when flushed by the dogs was to run a beeline down what became known as the Sow Trail. The radio man followed her flight with his antenna. He reported that she would hide that night and most of the next day at the dry end of the unit, and then the next evening would work her way back to the wet end, where the foraging was good. This beeline sow was no more. Of the six radio-collared pigs released in Puhimau, only one, the Electric Pig, survived.)

"This one today, he put up a good fight," Mattos said, of this afternoon's boar. "He probably said, 'Hey, you ain't

gonna take me.' He picked a good place to fight 'em, too—thick stuff, dogs cannot move around. He gave Keoki some pokes, too. I got a note down at the kennel. Keoki got one underneath the jaw, and a couple of skins."

Bobby Mattos is a speaker of pidgin. When his ancestors arrived from Madeira and the Azores to work in the cane, they met immigrant workers from the Philippines, China, Puerto Rico, Mexico, and Japan, and pidgin evolved among them as a *lingua franca*, a *lingua sacchara*. Like most pidgin-speakers, Mattos can turn the dialect up or down. In the field, hunting pigs, he turns it up thick and strong. In the office he turns it down almost to English, and Taylor can understand him.

"The pigs know what's going on, for sure," Mattos said, of the embattled few in the Puhimau Unit. "They're so afraid, you know? They're running for their lives. This pig today, the tracker barked him. Just one bark, and the pig was gone. I oooshed Paele on him, 'Go, go, go, go, go!' He knew which direction that buggah had run, and he found 'im again. We had Mo'o, too. Mo'o is a grabber, too. But that pig was so aggressive, he couldn't get in. Only Keoki got in."

HOMELAND OF THE FOREIGN TONGUE

Each morning we begin again. My wife
wakes me with a shove, and condescends
to try her sorry Deutsch with me; she speaks
like she's chewing mud. God,
she's dumb. I tell her so, but in a dialect she never
understands. Carefully now, she mouths her thanks
and takes me by the hand to the dampness
of the john, where she leaves me
to throw cold water on my face. I wash those parts
I want to wash and bump along the wall
to the sour kitchen, where coffee waits
and something tasteless chills against the plate.
Grace is blind, at any rate, and probably
deaf as well; it happens
only where angels let it—nowhere
you'll ever find in time. I've never
seen the woman's face, though once, too far
from here to count for much, I wished I could.
But it's morning come again, and she,
as is her habit, begins to sing above the soup; somewhere,
some angel pities me, as God must once
have pitied her: Her voice forgets
its tenement, and I neglect the words.

—Scott Cairns

Taylor turned to me. "Out of fifteen dogs, we have three grabbers," he explained. "The grabbers are like infantrymen. They're the ones that get hurt."

The tracker finds the pig, the grabbers grab it, and the helpers help, worrying its heels. The dogs' job is to surround and hold the pig, cutting off its escape routes until the hunters come up. The dogs sometimes kill small pigs on their own, and they routinely dispatch piglets, which the park's hunters call "rabbits." This pig-hunting method—one or two men and a pack of dogs—developed in the Paleolithic and is still the method Hawaii's sport hunters use. Park Service strategists have given some thought to new wrinkles. What would happen, they wonder, if they used a single dog trained to bark at the pig and not attack; suppose it was some small, unthreatening, yappy breed at which the pig would laugh before resuming his rooting? The dog would flag the pig by sound for the rifleman coming up behind. For now, however, the park men are sticking with the Paleolithic method. Park Service dogs are sometimes wounded, but the pack has yet to suffer a fatality. Pigs run through human beings who stand in their way. The humans go down like bowling pins, but the pigs are generally in too much of a hurry to work them over on the ground. Men hunting for pork are sometimes injured in Hawaii, but none of the Park Service hunters has been hurt.

"Keoki, he's kind of an old dog, isn't he?" Taylor asked Mattos.

"Yeah. He's just a bull, too—pit bull."

"Pit bulls aren't good for this?" I asked.

"They're good," said Mattos, "but not too much brain, you know?"

The hunter looked to the map on the wall. "Before this program, wherever you go there's pig damage, no matter where you look," he said. "Now all you see is green grass growing. Today the only damage I seen was real hard to see. It was underneath the uluhe ferns. They're not coming out anymore. They can stay *alive* underneath the uluhe, but they're not gonna come out and knock down hapu'u, or nothin' like that."

The thick tangles of uluhe, the false staghorn fern, reminded Bobby Mattos of the Electric Pig. "That sow, she sure knows what's going on," he said. "She just knows where to run. Dogs cannot pick up real good speed in the uluhe. They get all tangled up, whereas the pig will just put down her nose and—no problem. She's like a torpedo through there."

Pigs, built close to the ground, are made for crashing through brush, Dan Taylor explained. Dogs are rangier animals, and less canny. He asked if I had noticed the cracks on Kilauea. I had. Cracks ramify everywhere on the slopes of that volcano, a consequence of seismic shifts accompanying the mountain's vulcanism. Those cracks were often hidden by uluhe and other vegetation, Taylor said, and dogs sometimes fell into them. Pigs did not. Bobby Mattos nodded, and confessed that just last week the hunters had lost a dog in a crack. Dogs fell thirty feet

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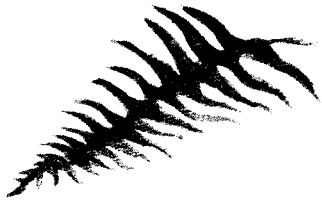
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sometimes, and the hunters had to go down after them with ropes and harnesses. It was slimy down there, Mattos added, making a face. "A pig knows the cracks, but the dogs don't know."

I could see how it was: The Electric Pig fleeing like a torpedo down her runways under the uluhe—captured once and collared, determined never to be captured again—the men cursing behind her, the dogs crashing through the fern tangles. Then the yelp as a tracker or a grabber felt the earth open up beneath, his barking suddenly frantic and distant, like the complaint of a fly trapped under a tumbler, the Electric Pig running on.



WE LEFT THE WATERSHED OF KILAUEA VOLCANO, the five dogs tied to the bed of the truck by short leashes. Ahead the smooth arc of Mauna Loa showed a pale red in the dawn light. Later in the morning a cap of cloud would form, cutting off the summit. Only early risers get to see the whole of the earth's greatest active volcano.

I could remember no mountain in my life that gave so poor a sense of scale. At this hour it looked more a mountain of sand than of lava. Mauna Loa might have been a near, lunate dune encroaching on the backside of this ohia forest. It might have been a giant, pale-rose moon rising over the same ohias.

The truth was somewhere in between. Mauna Loa contains 10,000 cubic miles of material. I once heard a park interpreter tell a Volcanoes Park audience that this one mountain contains more rock than the entire Sierra Nevada and Mount Shasta combined. Her facts were wrong but nicely suggestive. Mauna Loa is among the largest shield volcanoes in the solar system. Theia Mons, on Venus, is considerably larger, and Olympus Mons, on Mars, is even larger than Theia, but both those places are far away, and you can't get there by pickup truck.

Turning off the highway onto the Mauna Loa Strip Road, we left the ohias behind and meandered up through koa forest. The turns were sharp, the surface cracked and potholed. The koa trunks, white in the early-morning light, reminded me of aspen back home. The truck flushed several coveys of California quail. They were exotics, but I was glad to see them. It was hard to feel indignant—I am an exotic from California myself.

This trip into the dry forest of Mauna Loa's lower slopes was a training hunt for the young dogs and for me. The pigs of the Puhimau Unit, where the hunters had been concentrating their efforts lately, were so close to eradication—just three to six pigs left—that sometimes days

passed without the dogs' flushing a single one. Today the plan was to reacquaint the dogs and acquaint the writer.

Harry Pagan drove, checking the dogs occasionally in his rearview mirror. Pagan is Filipino-Puerto Rican, a dark-skinned man, stocky and quiet. At thirty-two, he is the oldest of the hunters.

"He seems to me the best of the lot," one of his Park Service superiors had told me. "He goes *through* the uluhe. He doesn't plan his hunt, or try to hunt *around* anything. He just goes where he thinks the pigs are going to be. He's a joy to hunt with. He's really good with a needle—good at sewing dogs up, getting them back to health once they get goled by pigs. Harry is unusual in that he hunts the 'Ola'a Tract. Most hunters in the 'Ola'a rain forest will look for signs right by the road. Harry will hike back for a couple of hours or more."

I had spoken with one female ranger who was convinced, having watched Pagan's calm intensity in the hunt, having seen his efficiency at killing pigs in hand-to-hoof combat, with a knife, that Pagan was a Vietnam combat veteran—had to be. He is not, but he does do weekend duty with the National Guard. He likes the military, and in conversation he often turns to soldiering for his metaphors. His partner today was Casey Baldwin, a young, blond Californian working seasonally as a hunter.

The dogs were Paele, Gus, Hana, Shy, and Moku. Paele was the tracker, the oldest and most experienced of the five. His name means "black" in Hawaiian, and he certainly was that. Gus looked to be part airedale, and Hana looked vaguely like a collie. Shy was a short-haired, muscular mongrel with a snuffly, rasping way of breathing that came, Pagan said, from heartworm. Moku was a lean, raw-boned, ribby one-year-old that looked to be part black-and-tan. The park's kennel-keeper and dog-procurer had told me, earlier that morning, of the importance of finding dogs with the right "lines." I could not remember meeting a bunch of dogs with lines more sketchy and tangled. I suspected that these had been recruited from hangouts comparable to the ones where, in human society, the French recruit legionnaires.

Halfway to the end of the road Pagan pulled off and parked. We unbuckled the collars, and the freed dogs hit the roadside bushes, marking every shrub in sight. That accomplished, we entered the bush. One after another the dogs stopped, hunkered in the shamefaced way of dogs, and unloaded, lightening themselves for the job. For a time that odor was heavy upon us. Then all the dogs were in running trim, and we smelled nothing other than the good desert pungence of the xeric vegetation on Mauna Loa's middle flanks. We wore long sleeves against the thorns, and baseball caps against the sun. We carried our lunch and water in day packs, and Casey Baldwin cradled the rifle, a lever action .30-.30.

A knife was best for pigs, Pagan told me as we walked. A knife was economical and less risky for the dogs. Sticking a pig wasn't as hard as it sounded—once you had a pig by the back legs, he was yours. In certain situations, though,

you had to shoot. A .22 was too small for the job. I wondered aloud about other calibers. What about a 30.06? Both hunters laughed at me. Too big, they said: it would go right through the pig and hit the dogs.

"Oh, I hunt from ten years old," Pagan said, when I asked. "On my own, and with my uncle. At ten years old, I knew how to stick a pig—the whole works. My first experience, I was scared. We caught four pigs in one bunch. They make a big sound, let me tell you. Loud grunting. *Mean!* In those days there's so much pigs, man. I mean it was unreal. Now you really have to work for your pigs."

"And you still like it?"

He smiled and wagged his head weakly, ruefully—a man admitting to a powerful addiction. "Oh, I love it."

We were moving through open parkland broken here and there by pukiawe thickets. Now and again Pagan would stop and intently watch Paele, the tracker. It was as if he were reading in Paele's behavior some transliteration of the olfactory messages the dog was picking up. We came to places where pigs had rooted. They had left furrows in the grass, the clods overturned, the undersides fine-bearded with rootlets. It was old sign, and Pagan was not interested. The dogs coursed through the bush without barking, and the two hunters spoke very little.

"You don't give voice commands," I observed.

"We're not too much into obedience," Pagan answered. "The only thing is to get them to fight the pig, right now. It's in the dog. If he's going to be a hunter, he'll show signs of interest early. Some are just natural. Some take longer than others. You got some cowards. You got some that just grab."

"They get hurt that way? Just grabbing?"

Pagan smiled and shook his head in sympathy for those dogs—yes, they got hurt that way. "Sows usually do the biting. I've seen dogs get their leg broken, just one bite. The boars use the tusk more. A tusk is what hurt Keoki the other day."

When we came to pukiawe thickets, Pagan generally would lead us through the middles. I understood why—if hunters were afraid to bushwhack, if the centers of pukiawe thickets remained inviolate, then pigs would never be eradicated from the national park—but fighting pukiawe was hard work. The sun climbs quickly in the subtropics, and soon we were all sweating or lolling our tongues. As the heat rose, so did the odor of the dogs. This pack did not smell at all like domestic dogs. They smelled gamy and half-wild, like the feral animals they were hunting.

Moku, the rawboned one-year-old, was a frolicker in tall grass. Whenever we came to a vale of it, he set off bounding, sometimes causing a chain reaction among the others, who thought he was onto something. Harry Pagan would watch Moku's false alarms expressionlessly and then smile a small, skeptical smile. Moku, it seemed to me, had little future as a hunter.

Hana did not seem promising material either, and in this view Casey Baldwin concurred. "Hana's just a carpet," Baldwin complained. Hana malingered, as usual, hanging

back with us human beings. "That dog was meant to be in the bathroom, to wipe your feet on." Harry Pagan, always the defender of young dogs, was more charitable. "He's still learning. Some take a while."

Paele, the tracker, was all business. Shy, the dog with heartworm, was diligent enough, but after an hour or two in the sun his malady began to slow him. "He's good for just so long," Pagan said.

Our luck with pigs was poor, and Pagan apologized. The trouble was lunar, he said.

"When we got a big moon, the pigs they travel, they travel. They move all night and sleep during the day. Without no moon, the pigs they sleep at night. When the big moon, you see a whole lot of sign, and you keep following, following." The pigs were skinny up here in the dry forest of Mauna Loa, he said. Pigs liked it better in the 'Ola'a rain forest. They liked the cool, and the mud, and the hapu'u, and 'Ola'a pigs tasted better. Pagan usually smoked his pig, or made it into sausage. He promised to take me to the 'Ola'a rain forest and show me some real pig hunting.

"You should have been here in July, when we were hunting in Napau," Pagan said. "If you were here in July, you'd need lots of notebooks. Forty-six pigs in twenty-one days. Camping out, drinking warm beer. No ice."

The Napau Unit, it happened, was where Kilauea was currently erupting. Recently the volcano had been going off every thirteen days or so, sending up incandescent thousand-foot fountains of lava, building a new cone at the place designated "O-vent," turning the night sky red. Today, as we rested in Mauna Loa's shade, O-vent was due for its twenty-fifth eruption in the series. Two eruptions ago, in that time of phenomenal hunting luck and warm beer, the hunters had been out after pigs when the volcano began to rumble. They heard the roar, like a jet engine in an interminable takeoff. They looked up to see cinders everywhere coming down from the sky. The hunting was too good to break off. They killed eight more pigs before discretion won out and they retreated from the volcano.

Our rest over, we plunged into another thicket of pukiawe. When we came out on the other side, Harry saw a farther pukiawe thicket, and we plunged into that.

Pukiawe, in the days of Hawaiian royalty, was the great equalizer. If a chief wished to lift his own kapu, temporarily suspending his untouchability in order to rub shoulders with commoners, he shut himself up in a smokehouse and cured himself over a smudge fire of pukiawe. Bushwhacking through the pukiawe now, sweaty and itchy, our pant legs burnished by the hides of sun-heated half-wild mongrels and slavered on by tongues, our shirts sappy and dirty and prickly with burrs, we had the common touch already. The pukiawe wasn't necessary.

By eleven in the morning the dogs had begun to drag. Several times Baldwin, coming up behind Paele, would shift his rifle, grab Paele by the scruff, and pitch the tracker forward. No disrespect was intended. Paele seemed grateful for these jet-assisted boosts onward into the fray.

We came to a stand of koas, and the dogs detoured inside to pant in the shade. At the edge of the grove were the remains of a pig killed on a previous hunt. A black, tusked head lay in the center of a dark and greasy circle on the grass. The smell was very high. I found the dead pig disquieting, like the pig that gave the title to *Lord of the Flies*. One of the dogs sniffed and prepared to roll in it. Pagan barked a guttural warning, and the dog drew back instantly. It pretended it had never really been interested in rolling, and trotted on into the shade.

When we reached the road again and the hunt was done, we had encountered no pigs. Pagan and I waited in the shade with the dogs while Baldwin walked down the road to fetch the truck. Moku sat between Pagan's legs and licked his face. The hunter accepted this for a while and then began to wrestle with Moku's jaws, holding them open while the dog squirmed. When Pagan released the jaws, Moku came back for more.

Pagan told me of a precocious puppy owned by a friend of his on the Kona coast, a puppy just ten months old and already covered with battle scars. A dog that aggressive was unusual. He spoke of Jim, one of the better trackers in the Park Service pack. As soon as Jim found a pig, he lost interest. He was a detective, not a warrior. While the other dogs cornered and fought the pig, Jim was off looking for another. "That was my dog," Pagan said. "I give him to the park. Too much noise, nighttime. Just want to go hunt." Harry spoke of hounds. Baying dogs were no good for this sort of work, he said. "You bring hounds here, no telling where the pig would stop. As long as he hears the hounds behind him, he's gonna keep running." Some sort of cross-hound was an interesting idea, Pagan thought. He spoke of the Electric Pig.

"That pig is so smart, you know? She has experience with people. On a transect one time, we saw her with three babies. On different hunts we managed to get all her babies. I think right now she doesn't have anything to look forward to. She doesn't have to worry about her babies. She can move out, she knows the terrain, she can hear the dogs. She won't stick around."

IN THE WAR AGAINST THE PIGS, AS IN MOST WARS, THE generals speak a different language from that of the troops.

"We achieved about fifty percent removal in mesic forest—medium-wetness forest, like on Mauna Loa Strip Road—in six months, which is better than you need to extinct the population in a three-year period, if our models and densities are about right," C. P. Stone told me.

Chuck Stone is the officer in charge of research for the pig-control program. Sitting at his desk, shelves of reports and bulletins and monographs behind him, he recited, off the top of his head, the figures on the enemy: The average age of the pigs caught was sixteen months, the average weight sixty-eight pounds. The oldest pig taken so far had been seven, and at that age its teeth were almost gone.

Most of the pigs taken in Volcanoes Park were of the dark phenotype, but occasionally the hunters, or a trap, turned up a pig with Polynesian characteristics—the straight ears, the long snout, the woolly undercoat.

Stone had just returned from an emergency meeting in Kipahulu Valley, on the island of Maui, where feral pigs were on an offensive into new territory. The Maui pigs were closer to domestic stock, with more red and brindled black-and-white in them. In Volcanoes Park pigs, Stone said, the parasite load varied with the habitat. The pigs up in the mesic forest of Mauna Loa were generally quite clean. The pigs in the drier, more stressful Puhimau Unit were often loaded. Pigs could accommodate a lot of internal company, and some Puhimau pigs, when you opened them up, just crawled.

Stone told me that the first method tried against the pigs of Volcanoes Park had been box traps, which were all the rage against feral pigs in Australia and California. "We had really good luck with that," he said. "We took quite a few pigs fast, and we thought, 'Boy, we're really home free.' It only lasted a couple of weeks, and then the numbers of pigs caught started going down. We now think we were just creaming off some of the younger and more naive animals."

Since then, he said, the pig-fighters have tried snaring, with some success. They once tried netting, with no success at all. Stone has given some thought to poison but doubts that that measure would prove economical. A few radical pig-detesters on Hawaii Island have contemplated introducing hog cholera and pseudorabies, but Stone has never favored such extreme measures. By far the best method to date, he said, has been hunters and dogs.

"The average success has been a pig every day's hunt. Lately we haven't been doing that well in areas where we have fewer pigs. With these last pigs we're going to have to get more inventive, as we did with goats."

My thoughts of late had turned Darwinian. I remembered the Electric Pig. "Has it ever crossed your mind that you might be producing a superpig out there?" I asked.

"Sure. That's what they've done with pheasants on the mainland, to a certain degree. All the pheasants that haven't flown before the gun are selected for, and you've got a lot more running pheasants. The same thing with some of the quail. And it's happened here, too, with our goat program. A lot of the surviving goats in this park are the black ones, the ones that dive down into the cracks as soon as they hear the helicopter. We're going to get something like that with pigs."

"But the difference with pigs," I suggested, "is that the thing you're molding is intelligence. A pig is an unusually intelligent animal, no?"

"Sure. Psychological tests put them well ahead of dogs."

"You might be producing a pig that's able to handle any contingency?"

"Perhaps. What we're hoping, of course, is that by fencing areas, and doing a wipe-out in each area, we're preventing the pigs from passing those genes on."

AT 4:30 IN THE MORNING, A FRAGRANT PRE-DAWN, the hunters assembled, joking sleepily and complaining, outside the pig-control office. Harry Pagan handed out headlamps and tested his walkie-talkie. We were headed for the Puhimau Unit in pursuit of the Electric Pig.

"You got rounds for the carbine?" Bobby Mattos asked.

"We got two clips over there," Pagan answered. "What a beautiful morning—to be in bed."

Pagan drove the Scout down to the kennel, and Bobby Mattos drove the pickup. The dogs were eager, whining and jumping up against the cages, the mesh thrashing in the darkness. Pagan, buckling Shy to his collar on the Scout, turned his face away as Shy tried to lick. He finished buckling by feel. I stood alongside Pat Finnegan, one of the hunters, and together we leashed dogs to the side panel of the truck. Finnegan was thinking about our quarry. "They think it's more important to get her out than the others," he said. "I don't know why. I'm tired of chasing her, really."

Pagan, Casey Baldwin, six dogs, and I began the hunt by walking the Puhimau Unit's southern fence. Bobby Mattos, Pat Finnegan, and their six dogs entered Puhimau from the other side and bushwhacked cross-country toward us. Andy Kikuta, the radio man, stationed himself on a dirt road that bordered the unit at right angles to our fenceline, and with a hand-held antenna he monitored the Electric Pig.

The dawn came on quickly, and we never really needed the headlamps. The steeply ascendant, sparsely foliated branches of the ohia were lovely against the lightening sky. Ohia branches beseech heaven in a way that has always made me think of Judith Anderson in *Medea*, and the old Hawaiians saw it more or less the same way—as a woman dancing the hula.

The light came up, color entered the world, and we could make out the scarlet of the ohia blossoms. The blossoms made the only points of warm color in a landscape from the cool end of the spectrum, hot spots in a xerophytic vegetation of drab olives and greens. In the old days the flowers of the ohia were sacred to Pele, the goddess of volcanoes. The reason, I would bet, is that each circle of long, scarlet stamens looks so much like lava fountaining. Each blossom is a little eruption.

Uluhe ferns grew everywhere, and the dogs floundered through. Sometimes the springy mats of ferns, like trampolines, refused to let the dogs down to earth; other times the mats let the dogs down hard.

"See the noise they make?" Pagan asked. He shook his head. "Pigs have tunnels underneath. Once a pig gets running in those tunnels, dogs can't stop him."

Mo'o, a pit bull with extraordinary vertical leap, was hunting in Pagan's pack today. This morning Mo'o was given to jumping the fence and hunting on the wrong side. Once, on impulse, from a dead standstill he cleared the thirty-two-inch fence with ease. Pagan looked back at me to see if I'd seen. "Mo'o is one of our acrobats," he said.

Mo'o is a grabber who has a long acquaintance with Pagan's sewing needle. He sometimes appears all slashed and bleeding from private wars of his own. Finding a pig by himself, he leaps in without bothering to bark for assistance. In Hawaiian, *mo'o* means "lizard, dragon," or "water spirit," or "young, as of pigs and dogs," or "brindled." Brindled dogs were favored as sacrifices to the water spirits. This was before pit bulls, of course, back in the days when Hawaii's dogs were vegetarian. It would have been impolitic to sacrifice a dog with the temperament of this particular Mo'o. Mo'o was brindled, all right, but sent on to the next world he would cheerfully have gone for the water spirits' throats.

At intervals Pagan would stop to confer by walkie-talkie with Andy Kikuta. He would inform Kikuta of our approximate position along the fence, and Kikuta would in turn give the Electric Pig's coordinates in relation to us. We were closing in on her, Pagan's dogs from one side, Bobby Mattos's dogs from the other.

Once, while speaking on the walkie-talkie, Pagan crouched and with an épée of swordgrass flicked leaf fragments from the twin clefts of a hoofprint. Until he cleaned it up, the print had been invisible to me. Another time, while listening to Kikuta give the new coordinates for the Electric Pig, Pagan pointed wordlessly to a spot low on the trunk of a small ohia, a place where the wood was debarked and worn smooth. A pig had rubbed itself there, Pagan whispered. Inside the smooth zone I saw the deep scratch of a tusk.

Pagan signed off and returned the walkie-talkie to his belt. We had the Electric Pig where we wanted her, he announced. We were driving her straight toward Bobby Mattos and his dogs.

Passing a seedling shrub, Pagan uprooted it. "Akia," he said. "They used this to make rope." Handing me one end, he invited me to pull and see how strong it was. It was strong indeed. I had read that the root and bark of akia were poisonous, the hemlock of old Hawaii. "This is to keep you alive," the Hawaiian who presented the bowl was supposed to have recited, ironically. Rough humor, but welcome, perhaps, like that salutation Socrates himself offered before downing his last drink.

I thought of the Electric Pig. She was in at least as tough a spot as Socrates'. I found myself wondering what would happen to a pig who took Hawaiian hemlock. Nothing, probably, considering the gastric prowess of pigs.

We were nearly to the dirt road. Kikuta and his radio antenna were just fifty yards away, through thick ohia, and Bobby Mattos was closing in to our left. We heard Mattos's dogs jump the Electric Pig. Our own dogs vanished in that direction. We ran toward the sound ourselves, but after seventy yards or so the barking and crashing of brush was coming from too many quarters, and we stopped and waited. The walkie-talkie crackled, and Mattos came on to inform us that his dogs had failed to stop the pig.

We sat in the shade of the ohia trees, temporarily defeated, waiting for the dogs to reassemble. After a time the

brush parted and Kikuta emerged, carrying his antenna by the pistol grip. He gestured with the antenna toward the forest behind us. The pig had circled around that way, he said. He and Pagan exchanged fatalistic looks.

"That pig sending us to the cleaner, boy," Pagan said.

"And not so big, either," Kikuta said. "Sixty pounds."

"That size can run. She's got her plan all down already. 'If they hit me from the front, break this way one hundred yards, then cut left.'"

We heard a rustling from the brush. "One dog coming?" Pagan asked.

"Yes," Kikuta answered.

Pagan listened hard. "Mo'o," he predicted, from the sound of the dog's breathing. Half a minute later Mo'o emerged from the brush.

Five minutes after Mo'o, Bobby Mattos emerged, sweat shining on his forehead, and right behind him was Pat Finnegan. Pagan took a look at Mattos's face.

"Bobby, Bobby, Bobby. No get mad. No get mad."

Mattos cursed the pig.

In the quest for the Electric Pig, Harry Pagan plays Starbuck to Bobby Mattos's Ahab.

Pat Finnegan joined the rest of us where we sat in the shade, but Mattos would not sit. "Ten meters, the bark, from me to you," Mattos told Pagan. The Electric Pig had been that close.

"I felt stupid," Finnegan said. "I was running toward the first bark when I heard the second bark way down there."

"Skid marks," said Mattos. He imitated, perfectly, the sound of a car squealing through a skid and then accelerating at the far end. "It looks like one place they try to grab her. Skid marks—bust-up, spin-around kind. What is this, my fifth time I hit her?"

The dogs Shy and Gus showed up, their tongues hanging, and they plopped in the shade. They had been hunting with Mattos's group today. "Can you tell us where the Electric Pig is?" Casey Baldwin asked. Neither dog seemed to have any idea.

The other dogs straggled in. Hana was among the first, and he immediately set to digging a hole for himself in the shade. Hana puts vastly more energy into making himself comfortable during rest stops than he puts into pig-hunting in the intervals between.

"As long as we take Hana, we always have fresh sign," Pagan said. "And *hana* in Hawaiian means 'work.' " He laughed at the irony. Baldwin, reaching out, made pig tracks with his knuckles in Hana's fresh black dirt. His tracks were good imitations. They would have fooled me, at least.

When the last of the dogs was accounted for, we returned to the hunt, working back in the direction we had come. Discarding any semblance of fair play, we began tracking the pig directly by radio. Andy Kikuta accompanied us, holding the antenna aloft to take a reading from time to time. The original purpose of the radio-collar—to study the behavior of pigs when flushed by dogs—had been forgotten. Casey Baldwin, whom I was following, grumbled a little. This was unsporting, he said. It made no sense to chase one pig this way, when five or six others still held out in the Puhimau Unit.

We were drawing close to the Electric Pig, and I had a strong intuition that this time we would get her. My feelings were mixed; I had developed considerable admiration for this pig. Suddenly her radio signal ceased.

Kikuta cast about for it without success. This had never happened before, and Kikuta looked puzzled. "It must be the terrain," he said. "She must be down in a puka somewhere."

Climbing a small ohia and getting no signal, he tried a taller tree. I lay on my back, folding my hands behind my head, and watched him climb. Kikuta looked good up there, his legs scissoring a crotch twenty feet high, with bright clouds moving above him. He pointed the antenna in one direction, then another. We listened for the beep. No sound came but the breeze in the crowns of the ohias. Perhaps the Electric Pig was still down in a puka—down in a hole. Perhaps this Einstein of pigs had figured a way to avoid human radar entirely.

Harry Pagan, taking a plastic quart bottle from his pack, raised it high and poured a thin stream for the dogs. Instantly they convened under it. Today's hunt was over, I realized. This tipping of the bottle was a gesture of concession to the Electric Pig. She would live to root again, at least until tomorrow.

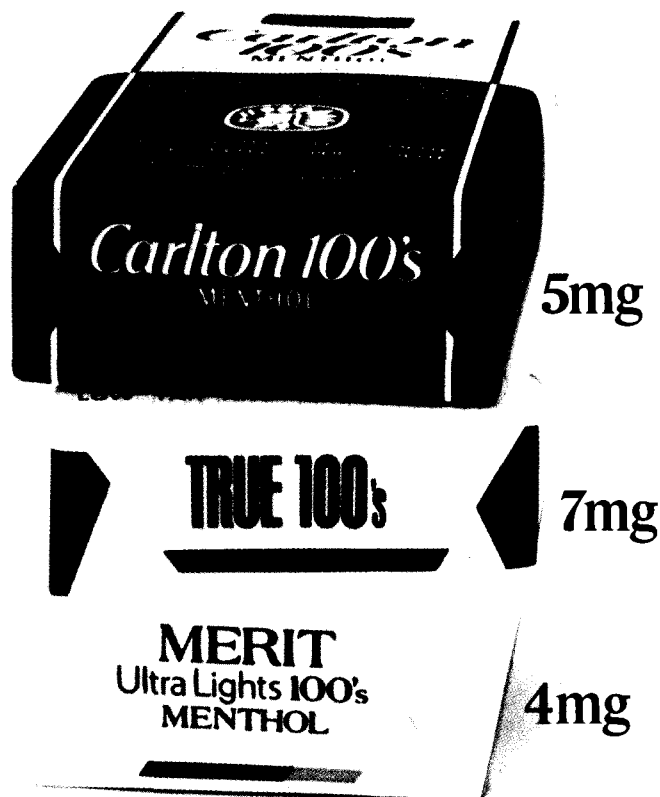
The dogs always behave for Pagan, and not one growled or shoved in the slender waterfall from the bottle. They made a pyramid of dusty hides and lapping tongues, and I thought, oddly, of that statue of the Marines raising the flag on Iwo Jima. This was dog sculpture. Pagan cocked his head to study the lines. For an instant the stream would spatter off a dog's forehead, and then that dog would reposition itself. Nothing was wasted; tongues intercepted it all.

"And not a drop hits the ground," I said to Pagan.

He smiled in what I took to be agreement, though I was not certain he was really listening. He emptied the first bottle and started a second, smiling his secret smile of pure love for dogs. Toward the end he remembered to save a swallow for himself. □

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Deregulation has brought new interest rates, new financial services, and new problems to institutions that have been very comfortable, and very stable, for fifty years

CHANGE IN THE BANKS

BY NICHOLAS LEMANN

TO A CASUAL READER OF FINANCIAL NEWS, WHAT'S going on in banking today must seem like a series of odd and unconnected upheavals: savings-and-loans go broke in Ohio and Maryland, the government virtually takes over Continental Illinois in Chicago, Congress considers closing various arcane loopholes in the banking laws, Argentina can't pay its debts. But there is a connecting thread. Banking is changing radically after a long period of relative calm; its structure is being altered fundamentally for the first time in fifty years. Almost everyone's life will be affected a little, and some people's lives will be affected enormously.

From the very beginning of the United States our banking system has been controversial. There were two early problems. First, as a new, rapidly expanding nation, we were prone to an unstable banking system, with frenetic, speculative lending booms followed by bank failures that took people's life savings. Second, there was, and still is, great hostility between the biggest American banks, in New York and recently also in California, which finance commerce, and the small provincial banks, which are often tied to agriculture. The First and then the Second Bank of the United States were attempts to stabilize banking in a way that also concentrated financial power in a single institution. When Andrew Jackson took the government's funds out of the Second Bank, in 1833, to the cheers of his agrarian, provincial supporters, he set a different course that would essentially be followed to this day: the government would still act to promote stability, but it would also disperse financial power.

As a result, banking today is the most heavily regulated industry in the country, and one of the most decentralized. All banks are chartered by the federal or a state government, most are inspected by several sets of government examiners, all can be shut down or given orders about important operating procedures. There are three federal agencies primarily concerned with regulating banks: the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency (which regulates national banks), the Federal Reserve Board (which regulates bank holding companies and state banks that are members of the Federal Reserve System), and the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (which regulates state banks it insures that are not members of the Fed). And that's not to mention the fifty state banking agencies, or

the federal agencies that regulate the savings-and-loans, which make mostly home-mortgage loans (as opposed to commercial loans—loans to businesses—which is what banks mostly make).

There are about 15,000 banks in this country—at least ten times as many as in any other Western country. Almost all of them are small. The hundred largest bank holding companies—corporations that own banks, usually big ones, and that have not been allowed to own unrelated businesses—control more than half of American banking assets, and the smallest 10,000 banks control only about ten percent. (Of course, in almost any other major industry the hundred biggest businesses control much more than half the assets.) The reason there are so many banks is that the states, with the federal government's approval, have protected their own banks by not allowing out-of-state banks to come in. Even within states some variant of that principle has often been applied: small rural banks have been protected by restricting big-city banks to operating in one county, one municipality, or even one building. The federal McFadden Act of 1927 in practice banned interstate banking by applying to national banks all the restrictions that the states applied to their banks. In 1956 the Douglas Amendment to the Bank Holding Company Act applied nearly the same restrictions to bank holding companies. (Other corporations can't own banks.)

The bank failures and other financial horrors of the Depression reinforced the national commitment to a heavily regulated, heavily decentralized system. The Glass-Steagall Act of 1933 added to the McFadden Act's geographical restriction on national banks a series of restrictions on the services they could offer. Before the Crash, banks had been allowed to underwrite stock offerings, and one unscrupulous practice, a variety of "self-dealing," was to lend a flimsy new company enough money to make its prospectus look terrific and then pay back the loans with the proceeds of stock sales made to unsuspecting investors. The Glass-Steagall Act separated commerce (such as stock underwriting) from banking, and in effect created the investment-banking industry.

As the financial world lived under these restrictions for forty years, every group within it, from insurance agents to stock-and-bond salesmen to farm bankers, became a constituency with something to protect. Banking achieved an equilibrium such that any change would offend some powerful interest group. As is usual in such situations, peace

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among the dukes was achieved at the expense of the unorganized citizenry. The Office of the Comptroller, which grants national bank charters (state banks are chartered by the state banking commissions, though otherwise they differ little from national banks), was stingy with them, approving about half the applications. The tight restrictions on entry into the field protected small bankers from the rigors of unbridled competition, with the result that for years the number of bankers who went broke was negligible. The Fed, through its Regulation Q, restricted the interest rate on bank savings accounts to five and a quarter percent, and federal law prohibited banks from paying interest on demand deposits (checking accounts). Words like *prohibit* and *restrict* are misleading about the true nature of Reg. Q, which was a tremendous boon to banks. Their raw material is deposits, and Reg. Q gave it to them at a guaranteed low price.

This system tended to help the rich and the poor and to hurt the middle class. Because banks could acquire their deposit base without having to pay much for it, they could afford to offer uneconomically generous treatment to very small depositors: free checking, many branches, many tellers, no service charges for bounced checks, elaborate monthly statements that included canceled checks. A poor person had at least some access to a banking system that would treat him decently—more than he has today. The rich were able to

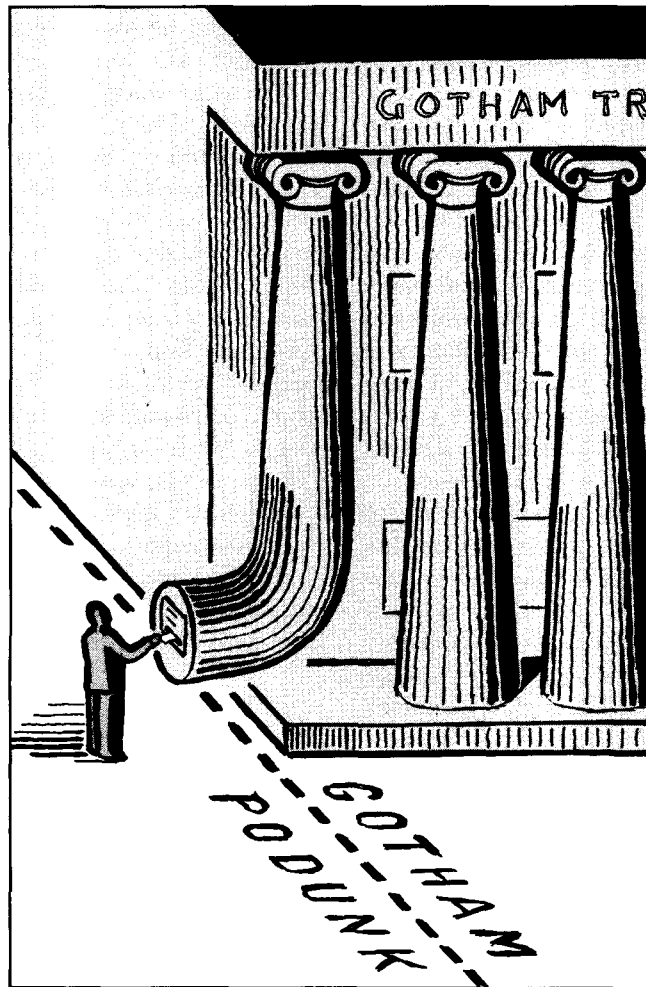
buy certificates of deposit for \$100,000 or more, on which banks were allowed to pay market interest rates (that is, well above five and a quarter percent). Everybody in between was subsidizing the system.

A subtle difference between the past and the present at the great majority of banks—something that can't be proved, but that people talk about—is that banking was a business run as much to exercise power as to make money. Traditionally a small bank is owned by a family or by a group of families that also own the prominent businesses in town. In most places the ability to control credit is extremely important, perhaps even more important than political power; the bank controls the flow of capital, both to the leading local businesses (whose owners are often direc-

tors of the bank as well as its biggest customers) and to small and new businesses. In this way the bank's directors might do better in their other businesses, but it is often also important to them just to be able to run things, whether or not there's money in it—to be able to decide which businesses prosper and which ones die.

The owners of a small bank don't always expect high dividends and profits. Small, independent banks tend not to be aggressive, entrepreneurial lenders; they're conservative and they keep generous capital reserves. It's worth remembering that the farmers who are having the most-

publicized loan-repayment problems usually did their risky borrowing from a federal agency (such as the Farmers Home Administration or the Farm Credit Administration), not the kindly local banker. Bank directors and owners—at least 150,000 people—are the clearest beneficiaries of a decentralized banking system, more than small borrowers. In a centralized system they would be less powerful, and their loans might not be processed with the same friendship and respect. These burghers were the most important opponents of the Second Bank in 1833, and they are the most important opponents of the big New York and California banks today.



WHAT DID MORE than anything else to crack the foundation of the old order was the Organization of Petroleum

Exporting Countries' dramatic oil-price increases in 1973 and 1979. When inflation is higher than five and a quarter percent, people with their money deposited in banks at Reg. Q rates are losing money, and they will either stop saving or look for a place that might pay a higher interest rate on deposits. In 1973 several investment firms began offering money-market mutual funds, which were able to pay market-rate interest on deposits by investing them in safe, high-interest federal securities and certificates of deposit (the money-market funds themselves are not insured). In 1977 there was \$3.9 billion in money-market funds; in 1979, \$45.2 billion; in 1981, \$181.9 billion. This money was coming out of banks, and the flow would continue as long as market interest rates stayed high and

bank interest rates stayed low. The banks began to worry.

One option for the banks was to try to persuade Congress or the state legislatures to outlaw money-market funds, but after some years of trying they found this politically impossible—the middle class realized what a raw deal it had been getting before, and would not stand for a return to the status quo ante. The only other choice was for the banks to join the game by raising the interest rates they paid small and middling depositors, and with some reluctance they settled on doing that. Deregulation seemed to be having its moment in every field anyway. In 1980 Congress, with the banks' consent, passed the Depository Institutions Deregulation and Monetary Control Act, which ordered that Reg. Q be abolished by 1986. In December of 1982 the first major step of the process took effect—banks were allowed to offer money-market deposit accounts, which were federally insured. In 1983 the amount of money in nonbank money-market mutual funds dropped for the first time (from \$207 billion to \$163 billion), while bank money-market accounts went from zero to \$375 billion. By the end of last year there was still nearly \$250 billion in non-interest-bearing checking accounts and more than \$288 billion in savings accounts—but there was \$210 billion in money-market funds, \$415 billion in money-market accounts in banks, and \$885 billion in certificates of deposit for less than \$100,000, which were deregulated in 1983. Price deregulation had suddenly arrived.

A fundamental concept in banking is the "interest-rate spread"—the difference between the price a bank pays its depositors and the price it charges its borrowers. The abolition of Reg. Q was a Pyrrhic victory for banks, because although it stopped the outward flow of deposits, it sharply narrowed the spread. Interest rates on loans had to be high because interest rates on deposits were high. Operations had to be streamlined and unprofitable activities pruned.

Over the course of a generation the biggest banks had formed holding companies and gone public. Now they were majority-owned by Wall Street institutional investors, who raptly watched the banks' quarterly financial reports. Declines in such numbers as "return on average assets" led quickly to declines in stock prices and to dissatisfaction with management. For small banks the end of Reg. Q meant that they had to think hard about profitability for the first time, both for the sake of staying in business and because small bankers know that if they want to sell, the price they will get is based on the size of their profits, not their assets—and many are expecting to sell within the next ten years, as interstate banking arrives.

The immediate losers from the new emphasis on profitability have been small depositors. Banks now regularly charge them for each check and penalize them when their balances drop below certain minimums. Computerized statements have already replaced canceled checks in many states. Service charges and fees have risen in a dozen categories. Worst of all, many poor people have simply lost their toehold in the banking system. In the inner-city

neighborhoods of cities like New York and Chicago a bank has become a rare sight. Instead there are storefront check-cashing operations that charge at least a dollar—and as much as ten dollars—per check. Many banks have set up special divisions to serve large depositors, leaving the small ones to wait in long, long lines if they want to see a teller.

So far, the rest of the public seems to have done well by interest-rate deregulation. People who can afford to keep \$1,000—the legal minimum balance for high-interest accounts—in a bank are now getting a much higher return on their savings than five years ago, with the same federal protection. Borrowers have had to suffer from high interest rates, but banks have been eager to lend because commercial loans are where the profits are. Though it would seem that deregulation, by driving interest rates up, would cause lending to wither, in practice the pressure on banks, especially big banks, has been the other way, toward high-risk, high-return lending. Small entrepreneurs can borrow money, though often at a rate that makes slow, sensible growth difficult. Big corporations, traditionally the best bank customers, had begun before deregulation to turn away from bank debt and toward "commercial paper"—notes their brokerage firms sell to investors—as a source of capital. Also they were abandoning the old gentlemanly banking practice of maintaining interest-free "compensating balances" on deposit at their banks as a condition of their loan agreements. The evaporation of the corporate market was one of several kinds of pressure that made big banks so eager to lend in Argentina and Mexico during the seventies—the loans that have become the foreign-debt crisis of the eighties.

THE BIG BANKS FEEL HEMMED IN. ON THE DEPOSIT side, the money-market funds are going after them and compensating balances are disappearing. On the loan side, it's commercial paper. Their stockholders want more profits. The banks themselves are large corporations with strong drives to expand. Meanwhile, big national companies outside of banking have been trying to get into the business of financial services—that is, handling consumers' money, which is what banks used to have almost to themselves.

Sears, Roebuck, one of the most aggressive financial-services companies, has been offering credit, consumer loans (loans to individuals for household purchases), and insurance for years. In 1981 it bought a brokerage firm, Dean Witter Reynolds, and a real-estate firm, Coldwell Banker. These are fields that real banks have traditionally been prohibited from entering. Sears also owns a savings-and-loan in California and a bank in Delaware, through which it is offering a new national credit card—and it would like explicit government permission to enter banking. Merrill Lynch has made clear its desire to enter banking, and it has a state bank charter in New Jersey. Other, hyphenated giants of the financial-services world—Shear-

son (brokers and underwriters)—American Express (credit cards and cash machines), Prudential (insurance)—Bache (brokers and underwriters)—want to be in banking too. In all, about a dozen securities firms own some bastard form of bank somewhere in the country. Unlike banks, these firms can operate nationwide under their own heavily advertised names—which would give them a tremendous head start on banks if they were allowed truly to get into banking.

All these pressures have led the big banks to put pressure of their own on the McFadden and Glass-Steagall acts. Interstate banking could theoretically get them millions of consumer depositors and commercial borrowers, and being able to enter commerce would bring them new profit-producers like selling insurance and underwriting stocks and bonds. With bank deregulation by price in place, the big banks badly want deregulation by geography and by product—they think that price deregulation has increased their risks, which other kinds of deregulation would spread and reduce.

The biggest of the big banks, and the most aggressive, is Citicorp, whose name is invoked by anti-big-bank interest groups as a synonym for big-bank voraciousness. In attacking the McFadden and Glass-Steagall acts, it has followed a dictum of the Chinese strategist Sun Tzu, hero to the current American military-reform movement: instead of engaging the enemy in a grand, formal battle on a single front (such as a bill in Congress to repeal the old banking laws), use the swarm technique, gaining ground by creating confusion.

A federal banking law passed by Congress in 1982 contained a provision that bank holding companies could buy failing savings-and-loans. (The savings-and-loan industry, with most of its assets in home-mortgage loans, was devastated by the inflation of the seventies—many savings-and-loans are today getting six- and seven-percent fixed-rate returns on their existing loans, while by necessity paying eight percent to depositors for the money to make new loans.) Just before the law was passed, Citicorp bought a failing savings-and-loan in California, which it renamed Citicorp Savings, and began taking deposits in California.

Since then it has added savings-and-loans in Florida and Illinois.

In 1980 Citicorp persuaded economically depressed South Dakota to let it start a bank there and began nationally marketing its MasterCard and Visa cards out of Sioux Falls, where it was free of New York's ceiling on credit-card interest rates. (Alaska, Maine, Nebraska, and Nevada, among others, also allow out-of-state banks to set up credit-card operations.) This year Citicorp persuaded the Maryland legislature to grant it full banking privileges in return for promising to hire 1,000 people for a new card-

processing operation in Hagerstown, another depressed area. Citicorp has started selling life insurance in England, and through various legal quirks and loopholes it also has a smattering of insurance operations in the United States.

And there is plenty more demolition of the walls going on. Automatic-teller machines, which dispense cash twenty-four hours a day and can be placed in all sorts of locations other than a bank building, have been allowed to creep across state lines in several places. Though banks can't open interstate branches, they can set up offices in other states to solicit commercial loans (which are made through the home office) or to process overseas loans. Though these loan-production offices aren't a very good way to penetrate new markets, because they lack an imposing presence and an established customer base, a 1982 study by the



Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta found 345 of them in operation across the country. The 1982 law that allowed financial companies to buy failing savings-and-loans in other states also allowed savings-and-loans to engage in commercial lending on a modest scale. BankAmerica Corp., of San Francisco, was allowed to buy Charles Schwab, a discount stock brokerage, and Seafirst, a big, failing bank in Seattle. Several New England states and several southeastern states allow interstate banking, but only among themselves, in arrangements called "regional compacts." The list of such encroachments goes on and on; overall, it's an indication that in American banking the old and durable arrangement has been falling apart since the early eighties, in the manner of Europe in the early teens.

THE SARAJEVO IN THIS CASE IS A MINOR INSTITUTION called the nonbank bank. In 1970 Congress amended the Bank Holding Company Act of 1956, which forbade bank holding companies to operate across state lines. Lobbyists for the Boston Safe Deposit and Trust Company were able to add one clause to the amendment's definition of a bank so that a "bank" became an institution that accepts demand deposits *and* makes commercial loans (Boston Safe Deposit, which doesn't make commercial loans, wanted out of regulation by the Fed). Thus a loophole was born: an institution that took deposits but didn't make commercial loans, or vice versa, was no longer officially a bank and therefore could be owned by an out-of-state bank holding company, or even by a company that wasn't a bank.

Gulf + Western, the conglomerate, set up the first nonbank bank in 1980, and over the next few years several securities firms, such as Merrill Lynch and Dreyfus, opened nonbank banks as part of their strategy of getting into diversified financial services. The big bank holding companies got the idea of using the loophole as a way into interstate banking. The Federal Reserve Board, which must approve applications by bank holding companies to start nonbank banks, was inclined to block the way, but in March of 1984 it decided that it couldn't legally turn down the U.S. Trust Company's application to open a nonbank bank in Palm Beach, Florida. More than 300 applications to start nonbank banks were instantly filed. Most of the nonbank banks would take deposits and would not make commercial loans; none of them would be of any great size. Their importance to their owners was strategic, not financial. But they created a crisis in the parts of the federal government that regulate banking.

To understand what happened next, it is necessary to consider the powerful interests involved, both in business and in government.

There are the big, nationally important banks in New York and California, which have a majority of bank assets but a tiny minority of banks. They are in favor of both kinds of bank deregulation left to come after price deregulation: product deregulation, which will allow them to enter other businesses, and geographic deregulation, which will allow them to go interstate. Many of them were tempted by the nonbank-bank loophole. Organizations like the Association of Reserve City Bankers, the Association of Bank Holding Companies, and, sometimes, the American Bankers Association, represent their interests.

There are big banks in cities of regional but not national importance in banking—Boston, Houston, Pittsburgh, Atlanta, and so on—represented by the Coalition for Regional Banking and Economic Development. They want interstate banking up to a point: the point beyond which the New York and California banks could compete with them. To this end they have invented a concept by which legislation would be passed enabling them to bank with their neighbors and no one else. These regional compacts are

established in parts of New England and the South, and are under consideration by state legislatures in the West, the Southwest, and a group of states with Ohio at its center. (This last region is known as the Reality Belt, because of the rigid journalistic convention that all stories about the Real America must be done from there.)

There are the thousands of small banks, represented by the Independent Bankers Association of America. Atavistically fearful of the New York banks, their first priority is to close the nonbank-bank loophole and prevent nationwide interstate banking, in order to preserve their markets. A usually reliable ally of theirs is the Association of State Bank Supervisors, which is worried that the demise of small state-chartered banks would leave its members without anything to supervise. The system by which banks can be either state or federally chartered is called the dual banking system, as in the ringing cry made in speeches at small-bank conventions: We must above all preserve the dual banking system!

There are the money-market funds, represented by the Investment Companies Institute, which want to keep banks from being able to offer no-minimum-balance, unlimited-checking money-market accounts (as banks will be able to do next year); the independent insurance agencies, represented by the American Insurance Association, which want to keep banks from being allowed to sell insurance; and the stock brokerages, represented by the Securities Industry Association, which want to keep banks from being allowed to underwrite stocks. These groups are opposed to product deregulation, because it would open them to direct competition from banks. They don't much object to nonbank banks except insofar as nonbank banking might begin a rush to deregulate products along with geography.

And then there are the government organizations concerned with banking, which view each other just as suspiciously.

The Comptroller of the Currency is a political appointee who reports to the secretary of the Treasury. President Jimmy Carter's comptroller, John Heimann, changed the office's national bank-chartering policy so that it began to approve more than 90 percent of applicants in order to promote competition. President Reagan's first comptroller, C. Todd Conover, was the great government champion of nonbank banks until he resigned, in May, saying that he had become fed up with the impossibility of getting anything done in Washington. He was not a Wall Street pro like Heimann but a California consultant and a free-market conservative. The independent banks resented Conover, because of their feelings about nonbank banks, and often called for his resignation. The Fed didn't like him much either, because he was for a less tightly regulated banking system. A theory about Conover popular in independent banking circles was that he was a pawn of Donald Regan, the former Treasury secretary, who in turn was a pawn of his old company, Merrill Lynch, which wants to get into interstate banking and wreak havoc on the small

banks. The acting comptroller is H. Joe Selby, a career bureaucrat.

The Federal Reserve is a classic regulatory agency that believes in regulation as a noble cause and that, being relatively immune from politics, hasn't been affected by the anti-regulatory spirit of the times. It wants to keep its strong power over bank holding companies (for reasons of bank safety and as a way of controlling the money supply) and to keep out of banking new players over whom it doesn't have power. Thus the Fed is unsympathetic to nonbank banks' entering into banking, because they are kinds of institutions that it doesn't regulate, but it isn't especially hostile to interstate banking, through which the turf of the banks owned by holding companies, and hence of the Fed, could only expand.

The Reagan White House plays almost no visible role in banking issues (though in this year's State of the Union message there was a brief, vague reference to continued deregulation of the financial system), except in one minor respect. There is a Task Group on Regulation of Financial Services, chaired by Vice President Bush and run by Richard Breeden, a former Wall Street lawyer. It wants to consolidate bank regulation under the Fed and a new Federal Banking Agency, which would essentially be the Comptroller with many new powers. Under the Task Group's initial plans, the Fed would have become much less important, because the Federal Banking Agency would have had regulatory power over the big national bank holding companies. But when Paul Volcker, the chairman of the Federal Reserve's board of governors, got wind of this, last year, he was able to use his influence to change it: the Task Group revised its recommendations in favor of allowing the Fed to keep regulating the largest bank holding companies. Conover looked on helplessly as the prospect of control over a third of the bank assets in the country slipped away from his agency. The recommendations are nowhere near being enacted or even considered by Congress.

The Senate Committee on Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs is headed by Jake Garn, of Utah, a Republican who came to the Senate on one of the early waves of sev-

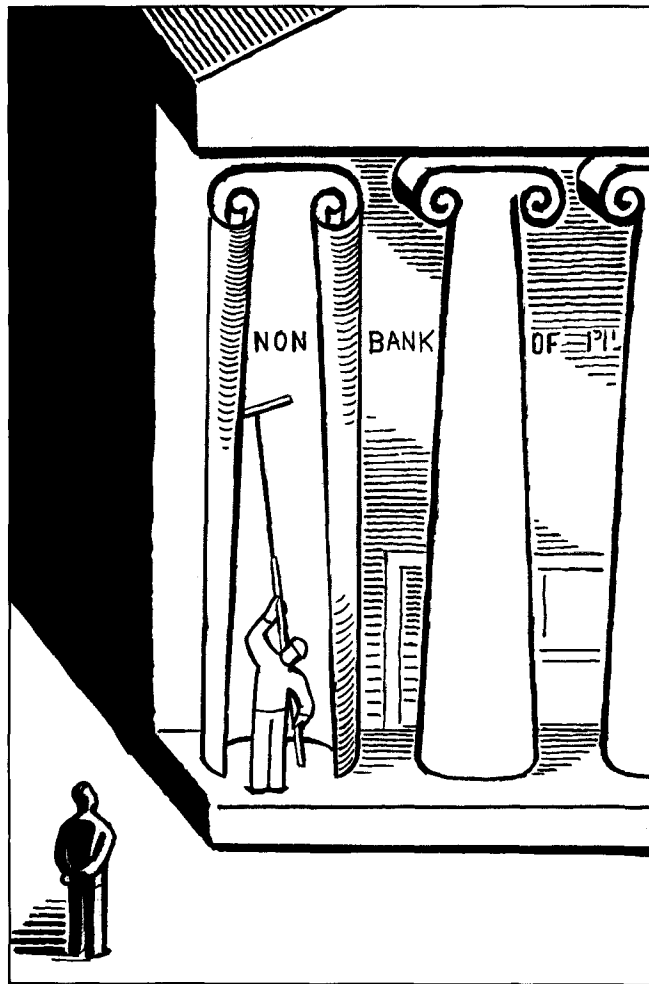
enties conservatism. Garn is a former insurance agent, but he tends to be sympathetic to the big boys in deregulation—both the largest banks, which want to expand their reach, and the Fed, which wants to regulate them as they do so.

The House Committee on Banking, Finance, and Urban Affairs is a stronghold of small-bank populism. It was chaired for eleven years by the late Wright Patman, of Texas, who as a very junior congressman in 1932 proposed the impeachment of Andrew Mellon, the secretary of the Treasury and an embodiment of eastern money power. Its

current chairman is Fernand St Germain, of Rhode Island, an old-fashioned liberal Democrat, first elected in 1960, who is hard to figure out—he is autocratic and unpredictable, and though he frequently delivers emotional diatribes against deregulation, he has pushed several important deregulation bills through the House.

In the spring of 1984 one of the few issues that Garn and St Germain agreed about was the nonbank-bank loophole, which they were both against; it therefore appeared that the loophole would quickly be closed. Garn put together a comprehensive deregulation bill that closed the loophole and also gave banks the power to begin underwriting and selling some securities, though not corporate stocks and bonds. Through the spring and summer he kept a fragile peace among the interest groups—only the Securities Industry Association was strongly against the bill—and nurtured the bill until it finally came to the floor in September. It passed the Senate by a vote of 89 to 5.

But St Germain didn't like it. He wanted to close the nonbank-bank loophole, period, and he was unalterably opposed to granting new securities powers to banks at the same time. He dropped the banking bill he had proposed. In October the Ninety-eighth Congress adjourned. Conover, who had stopped approving nonbank-bank applications on the assumption that Congress would pass a bill before it adjourned, began approving them again. The day Congress convened this year, St Germain introduced a simple loophole-closing bill, which during the winter and spring moved at a stately pace through his committee.



Garn's attention during the winter and spring was on his trip aboard the space shuttle, not banking deregulation.

But the action continued, in the federal courts. In March a Florida district court, ruling on a lawsuit by the Independent Bankers Association of America, issued a preliminary injunction to prevent Conover from granting any more nonbank-bank charters. The Fed, having approved twenty-two nonbank-bank applications in the year since its U.S. Trust decision, announced with pleasure that it would stop processing them pending the outcome of the Florida case. (In May a federal circuit court decided that U.S. Trust didn't have the right to open a nonbank bank in Florida after all, putting in jeopardy the twenty-two other nonbank banks whose applications the Fed had approved.) In April the Supreme Court agreed to hear a suit involving the Fed and a Kansas company that had applied to open thirty-one nonbank banks, which would be immune to regulation by the Fed because they wouldn't be part of a bank holding company. In June the Court unanimously ruled against a challenge by Citicorp to the constitutionality of the New England regional compact—a tremendous victory for the big regional banks, which will expand aggressively within their territories.

Typically in banking the world changes and the government rushes to catch up with it, in order to be able to continue to exercise control. This has become true of interstate banking during the past year of the government's arguing about nonbank banks. Somehow, everyone now regards interstate banking as inevitable. The clearest sign of this came when Paul Volcker, testifying before St Germain's committee late in April, endorsed nationwide interstate banking, to be phased in after three years of existing and planned regional compacts. Even the regional banks see the regional compacts as a temporary phase, though three years is much too temporary for them.

TO THOSE NOT IN THE FINANCIAL BUSINESS OR IN financial regulation, what difference will deregulation make? Arguments about the public interest in banking come mostly from the self-interested, so they deserve not to be taken at face value. But here are the worries: Deregulation will make the banking system less stable, with potentially disastrous results for small depositors and for the world economy. Deregulation, and especially interstate banking, will cause whole industries and areas of the country to lose the ability to borrow money, and hence they will wither and die. Product deregulation will lead to corrupt, incestuous dealings by banks which will hurt consumers. Deregulation will hurt poor people. Deregulation will lead to excessive concentration of financial power, and in turn to predatory pricing and many other ills.

Of these, by far the most serious problem would be instability, and there seems to be strong evidence that it already exists. The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation was founded in 1933. Through 1980 it processed \$9 billion worth of bank failures; from 1981 through 1984 it pro-

cessed \$30 billion worth, which doesn't count Continental Illinois, with its \$40 billion in assets, because it wasn't allowed to fail. In 1981 ten banks failed; in 1984 seventy-nine failed; the FDIC expects the number this year to be even higher. It makes intuitive sense that deregulation brings higher risk to any industry. From almost the moment the 1980 deregulation bill passed, the rate of bank failure began to zoom far beyond what it had been at any time since the Depression. What more dramatic proof could anyone want that deregulation is damaging the stability of the banking system?

Bank stability is an odd issue. No big bank keeps much more than a twentieth of its deposits on the premises in cash; there is no bank that could not be badly hurt by a run on its deposits, though any solvent bank could survive one. The system depends on confidence, so a lack of confidence in itself can cause instability. Thus bank regulators both don't believe that deregulation is responsible for the rash of bank failures and would be loath to say so if they did believe it, because for the government to send out signals that the whole banking system had become unstable would be inherently destabilizing. The alternative explanation for the bank failures is that they were caused by an extraordinary set of circumstances in the economy. The recession of 1981–1982 brought the highest rate of business failure we have seen since the Depression. The farm crisis devastated the agricultural banks, by leaving them with virtually no good loan customers. The Fed's tightening of the money supply, beginning in 1979, made inflation low but interest rates high, which lessened the economic attractiveness of borrowing money and so depressed loan demand. Just one factor—the giddy boom and bust in oil prices from 1979 to 1982—was responsible for virtually all of the most famous bank problems of the past few years: Penn Square; Seafirst and Continental Illinois (both dragged down by bad loans they had bought from Penn Square); and, in 1983, First National Bank of Midland, in Texas—the second largest U.S. bank failure. (The largest was Franklin National Bank of New York, in 1974.)

What can't be denied, though, is that interest-rate deregulation, by cutting the banks' spreads, put pressure on banks to lend as much money at as high a rate as possible. In that situation bad loans are chickens coming home to roost. Savings-and-loans, which can't make many commercial loans, have run into trouble with high-flying investments made for the same reason—the need to restore the spread. It's impossible to spend any time as a reporter around the banking world without hearing rumors that several very big New York banks are teetering on the brink. There's a secret list of eight banks, the story goes, that the Fed is keeping alive by secretly channeling funds to them, or a secret list of eleven banks that the Comptroller won't let die. Last year the Comptroller filed an official proceeding to force the Bank of America—the second-largest bank in the country—to increase its capital reserves as a precaution against loans going bad. That nationwide disaster hasn't struck yet shows that the rumors aren't true, or that

we've been lucky, or that the regulators and examiners are doing a wonderful job.

Because of deposit insurance, unless there is an utter collapse of the banking system these are the problems of bankers and bank stockholders, not depositors. It is extremely unlikely that bank failures today could bring thirties-style losses of life's savings to individuals; the FDIC insures deposits of up to \$100,000, and its de facto policy is to cover larger ones, too. The big problem in deposit insurance is the Federal Savings and Loan Insurance Corporation, which experts think is sure to go bankrupt over the next few years and will need some sort of federal bailout. (The FDIC wants to solve the FSLIC's problems by taking it over.)

The fear that big national banks will drain capital from regions is a venerable one—it's the policy argument, if not the real reason, underlying the long history of laws against interstate banking. The idea is that Citicorp would soak up all the deposits in Nebraska by offering enticing inter-

est rates and then lend them out in New York or even Argentina, leaving small-business borrowers in Nebraska to go broke. Many Americans resent New York and believe that it's too powerful to begin with, so this argument strikes an emotional chord. But it's very difficult to substantiate. The big New York banks were allowed to branch upstate in the seventies, but they weren't able to make significant inroads on the banks already there. California, which has a long tradition of statewide branch banking, vigorously continues to generate new banks. If an area is truly a poor loan risk, then the local banks are not likely to plunge in with loans that Citicorp would be afraid of; typically, because of high reserve requirements and small bankers' predilections, independent banks lend out much less of their deposits than huge banks lend of theirs.

There is some basis for saying that the small banker's vaunted loyalty to his community is best seen in the loans he makes to his board members—they're the people who really would get a worse deal from Citicorp. The FDIC says that at nearly half of the failed banks of the eighties there have been insider loans that went bad. Even Texas Commerce Bancshares of Houston, probably the most widely respected of the big regional banks and a strong advocate of regional compacts, announced earlier this year that its profits were down because a big loan to one of its directors had gone sour. Anyway, it is possible to guard against capital drain by legislating against it, rather than by banning interstate banking. Most interstate-banking proposals contain a requirement for making some proportion of loans in the places where money has been deposited.

The problem of what is called self-dealing by banks is the strongest argument against allowing them to diversify into other financial services. At worst, banks would unload worthless stock on consumers, as they did in the twenties. Or a bank diversified into financial services might require a customer to buy from its line of collision insurance before it would approve a car loan. Sears inspires the most elaborate fears: Representative Timothy Wirth, of Colorado, at a hearing last year imagined Sears selling a customer who came into the store to buy a hammer a house and a mortgage before he could get out the door, and a stock portfolio later. But Sears, as part of its bid to be allowed into banking, has proposed strict rules against the tying together of its financial services. There is legitimate cause for concern, especially regarding banks' selling insurance, but again, better safeguards can probably be created through legislation and regulation that would prohibit the tying of one bank service to another than through the elaborate partitioning of the financial-services industry that prevails today. Those who disagree most vehemently with that are the people who rule the parts.

The detrimental effects of deregulation on the poor aren't conjecture, they're demonstrated fact—a matter that's a secondary issue in the politics of banking only because it offends no powerful interest group. A study last year by the Comptroller of the Currency showed that banks' total service charges on deposits more than doubled

PRO VITA

What I love about a backhoe is
the way it braces itself against itself,
with two flat feet to fight its appetite, the shovel
undermining just
the terra firma which its hinder parts

rely on. So the man in me
is making inroads everywhere—whole cities rise
where he has wrecked the gardens—while the woman,
without whom he can't make headway anyway,
must stay her ground with equal force
The latitudes of play

are ampler for the rules; and clouds look clearer
in a lake than not; the poets lived this long
so they could practice birth control.
Excited by a simile, they take
the indecorum of a stagnant ditch

and make a mirror of it. Meanwhile it's
the backhoe man who cares to read.
At lunch he hunches over
his *Inquirer*, which is full
of spiritual facts of life, like

MALE GIRL GETS SELF PREGNANT, and he loves it.

—Heather McHugh

between 1978 and 1982 (the figure went from \$2 billion to \$4.6 billion). These charges encompass everything from monthly fees to big bounced-check charges to per-use charges at automatic-teller machines and even to fees charged to retirees for cashing their Social Security checks. Big depositors are largely immune.

The problem of service charges could be handled through requirements that fees be disclosed when customers open accounts and legal exemptions for certain income groups from certain fees—a series of reforms that usually go under the name of “lifeline” banking. The Consumer Federation of America, in Washington, and the state banking commissioners of New York and Massachusetts have been pushing these reforms, and Representative Cardiss Collins, of the West Side ghetto in Chicago, has proposed a lifeline-banking bill. But the issue is always the first to be put off for another day by legislators and lobbyists.

Reg. Q was one solution to all these problems. St Germain sometimes speaks about it nostalgically, though he helped kill it, and the few genuine banking populists who remain, including Representative Byron Dorgan, of North Dakota, openly long for a return to Reg. Q. That is inconceivable now. Whether the excesses of deregulated banking can be effectively curbed through legislation will be a good test of who’s right in the battle between traditional liberals and neo-liberals. The traditional New Deal liberal position is that in order to protect a noble social goal it is necessary to build a politically powerful constituency for it. Social Security recipients must be kept happy in order to protect welfare recipients; in banking it is worth giving thousands of rich small-town bankers government price controls (by means of Reg. Q) if this will protect the poor. The bankers give money to their congressmen, the congressmen protect Reg. Q, and the poor are helped. The new generation of liberals is impatient with such elaborate arrangements—they’re inefficient, they favor certain groups, they stifle the market’s creativity—and it wants to help the poor just by making excessive charges illegal and to forget about the thousands of small-town bankers. Ah, the traditional liberals would say, but then the efforts to help the poor will always be subverted, because they lack a constituency. We’ll soon see who is right.

Concentration of power is the vaguest of the putative dangers of bank deregulation—the objections to it are based on principle more than on specific bad effects it might have. The path to concentration would probably be mergers rather than all-out war between the big and the small banks. In the seventies a few states—for example, New York and Texas—let their big-city banks operate statewide. The banks found that starting branches or new banks as a way of entering new markets didn’t work well, and that buying banks in new territory was a much better way to acquire depositors and borrowers. Because the big-city banks paid generous premiums for local-bank

stock that had previously had limited market value, the financial enticement for the local banks’ shareholders to sell was irresistible.

It is probable that the same thing would happen nationally, at a pace made frenzied by the merger professionals on Wall Street. The scenario runs like this: During the heyday of regional compacts, which is just beginning, Atlanta’s banks will buy up Birmingham’s, and Dallas’s will buy up Tulsa’s, just as Boston’s banks have been buying up Hartford’s. Then, in a few more years, the barriers to nationwide interstate banking will begin to come down, and there will be another wave of mergers, this time with Citicorp and Bank of America moving into Denver and St. Louis and Chicago. Though most of the interstate-banking proposals allow individual states or even regions not to participate, in practice it will be very difficult for anyone to resist once it becomes clear what a killing bank shareholders can make.

The system that emerges will not be truly centralized banking (in all of Canada there are only seventy-one banks). Citicorp doesn’t want to own 4,000 rural banks. But it will be significantly less decentralized than banking is today. If you live in a city or a suburb, this is one change in banking law whose effects will be instantly visible as you drive down a major thoroughfare, or watch television, or read your newspaper. For most people, it will make life more convenient.

But another effect of a concentrated financial system is something that isn’t visible. Local banks are the seat of authority for a significant group that might be called the local big-shot class. Its members are lawyers, auto dealers, furniture-store owners, doctors, and hundreds of thousands of others—people who are important in the place where they live but who are not part of the fabric of national institutions like corporations, the government, unions, and universities. In almost any place but a metropolis the bank is the symbol of the order by which these people live. They are engaged in small-scale commerce, which depends on credit, which the bank controls. That’s why the banker in a town is the person most likely to know about, and to influence, everything that’s going on in it. It is a mistake to think that if 10,000 small banks matter less, no one will care but 10,000 small bankers, many of whom will have the proceeds of a sale to console them. Their loss of influence will affect the whole local system, to which the bank is like the sun fixed in the sky. The accountants who do the bank’s and its allies’ books, the agents who write its insurance, the feedlots that live on its loans, and all of their employees—together they form an extensive matrix of acquaintance and outlook that doesn’t matter to bank holding companies. The local big-shot class has been declining in power for two generations, as the national institutions have grown. Interstate banking will be its latest step down. □



A Short Story

3

THE END OF GRIEF

BY LEE K. ABBOTT

THE WORST THING, IN MANY WAYS THE ONLY THING, I heard about when I was growing up, in the late fifties and early sixties, was the horrible death of my father's brother, my uncle Gideon, on the Bataan Death March in April of 1942, an event that for those of you who, like me, were absorbed by pictures and news reports of the Vietnam War must now seem as peculiarly dated as the times of knights errant and fire-breathing dragons.

"Remember this," my father would say when I was small. "We human beings are capable of some real nasty behavior."

Each family has its own history of heartache, its private

record of betrayal or misfortune; but when I was a youngster—and probably because we lived so far out of the way, in Deming, New Mexico, in a desert as white and scorched and flat as one hell I've heard described—I believed, stupidly, that this infamy, a march of 78,000 native and American troops on a no-account Philippine peninsula, had touched everyone in our own, safe world. From my mother, before she became a drunkard who was carried off one day to live quietly and ever after in a private hospital in Roswell, and before she and Daddy divorced, I had learned about the other tragedies we Bakers and Hopcrafts (her people) had suffered: bankruptcies, disasters associated with weather or automobiles, paper fortunes that blew

away like leaves, a drowning, a stillbirth, a black sheep or two. Yet while my mother could look backward for centuries, to the first of my ancestors who settled in the American Southwest in the early 1800s, my father, smart too, and just as familiar with our personal lore, could see only from the beginning of the Second World War to what was its mortal end for the young man I am said to be the spitting image of—my uncle.

Now, at thirty-seven, I remember clearly how Daddy, in his odd fashion, used to wish me good night with stories from a past that was no more important to me personally than money is to a rock. When I was in the third grade, he'd tell me—sitting at the foot of my bed, smoking a Pall Mall, an ashtray balanced on his knee—about the diseases suffered by the men in the II Corps, including my uncle: dysentery, beriberi, night blindness, hookworm, diarrhea, mysterious swellings. When I was in the fourth grade, a time when I thought only about Little League baseball or swimming meets at the Mimbres Valley Country Club, he was taking me into his office, the newest outbuilding on our ranch, to show me his Department of the Army maps and geological surveys.

"They marched from here," he'd say, pointing to a cross-hatching of lines identified as Balanga, "on the East Road to Lubao on Route Seven." His finger would trace the route, sometimes a path of gravel and packed dirt. "They went from Capas by train and walked the next nine miles to Camp O'Donnell."

Yes, these were the names I heard through grammar school and into junior high: Bagac and Orion, the Marvilles Mountains, the island of Luzon, Manila Bay. In the year of my first kiss (Jane Templeton, at an FFA fair in our National Guard Armory) he forced me to memorize the titles and honors of the Japanese commander, Lieutenant General Masaharu Homma, and several of his officers, including Colonel Nakayama and Colonel Takatsu. While my friends Dub Spedding and Bobby Hover were collecting memorabilia about Ted Williams and Hammering Hank Aaron, I was reading *Back From the Living Dead*, by Major Bert Bank. My father had sent to Alabama for it, had read it so thoroughly that the pages had become creased and soiled and clotted with his notes, and by God I was going to read it too, just as I would read, when he was finished, books like *Zone of Emptiness*, by Hiroshi Noma, and the documents published by the Allied Translator and Interpreter Section (ATIS), General Headquarters, Southwest Pacific Area. Once, when I was a sophomore at Deming High School, brainy enough to be on the debate team and beefy enough to play varsity Wildcat football, he even gave me a quiz.

"Before the surrender itself," he began, "what were our soldiers eating?"

We sat in his office, its many shelves laden with charts and papers and file folders, his desk a clutter of books and writing materials. On one wall hung a pair of khaki trousers

and an Imperial Army battle sword; on another, a partial Order of Battle.

"Who surrendered, by the way?"

"General King," I answered, a name I knew as well as my own. "On April ninth, at approximately fourteen-hundred hours."

The room was full of smoke already, and, owing to the glare from the floor lamp behind him, he seemed not so much my father as an old, sly stranger—a wizard, I thought, or an Indian medicine man—whose tests I had to pass in order to live as an adult.

"The food, Scooter," he said. "The meat first."

I recited the list: carabao, pack mule, lizard, dog, and monkey, even the meat and eggs from pythons.

"How much did black-market cigarettes cost?"

"Five dollars," I said. "Regularly they were five cents a pack."

He shook his head. "It kept changing," he told me. "Remember the situation: one day a certain price, the next day another. This is vital."

On it went. Name the military hospitals and the officers in charge. How close was Corregidor? Why wouldn't Major General Jones take off his sunglasses? Who was the commander of the 65th Brigade of the Japanese 14th Army? What American college had he attended? Describe the symptoms of malaria. What is Article 3, Chapter 1, of the Japanese Army Regulations for Handling Prisoners of War? Translate *bushido*. *Rikutatsu*.

At eleven I stopped him. We'd been at it for two hours. "I got to study," I said. "Physics."

He was shuffling documents, and I wanted to be elsewhere. In my room, I thought. In dreamland. Anywhere.

"Okay," he said. "Tomorrow we'll try something else."

I was at the door when he called me back.

"One more question," he said. "Why wasn't I in the war?"

A wind had come up, from the south and warm as breath. Tomorrow, while we classified soldiers according to sector and probable cause of death, we would have rain.

"Married," I told him.

He was rubbing his forehead, looking into space. "What else?"

"Medical deferment," I said. "Punctured eardrum, flat feet, pulmonary stenosis."

This sort of exchange worsened as I grew older and, in his mind at least, came to resemble his brother more clearly. We had the same forehead, he'd insist, pitching me yet another curled, yellowed photograph he'd filed in his fireproof cabinets. We had the same hair, too, coarse as thread and more brown than blond. The same watery hazel eyes. Our cheek structures were virtually identical, high and angular. We even had, my father claimed, comparable habits of mind. We liked puzzles. Within reason, we took risks: embraced speed, high places, darkness. We hated bullies, dishonesty in our friends. We were nimble, alert, sensitive to climate changes. Gideon had traveled—Palm Springs and Chicago—and so would I. He preferred tall women;

so mine, inevitably, would be tall. We were readers but not sissies. When I graduated, Daddy took me out to his office, made me sit, and told me to open the box on his desk.

"It's a present," he said. "You'll like it."

It was a gold Longines, a wristwatch I wear still, and I realized immediately that Daddy had wrapped it himself, maybe a dozen times before he was satisfied.

"Look at the inscription." He leaned across his desk, pointed.

Still in my cap and gown, the tassel tickling my neck, I could hear my mother calling us to the dinner table. The ceremony had been over for an hour.

"Read it," my father told me.

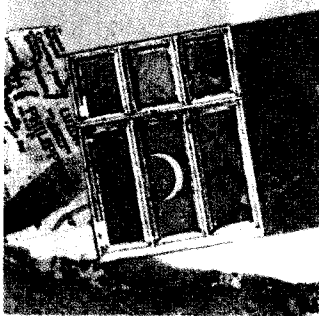
Engraved on the back in small Gothic letters was this: *Gideon Alan Baker. Graduation: 16 June 1940. From his loving brother, Lyman.*

"Gideon left it here before he enlisted," Daddy said. "He thought somebody might steal it."

I said thanks and stood to shake hands as I had been taught, firmly and with the full palm.

"You take care of that," he said, coming around his desk; and then I understood, more in my bones than in my brain, that he was smiling as he had in 1940. To his mind, the hand he was holding, long-fingered and too soft, was less mine than his brother's; for him this was an instant of joy he had rescued, as boldly as if it were a person, from a past as black and permanent as death itself.

"Gid liked expensive jewelry," Daddy said. "You will, too."



WE WOULD BREAK EVENTUALLY, MY FATHER AND I, but for three years, while I was at the University of New Mexico, we continued our strange collaboration/review of Bataan, and torture, and my uncle. Within a week of my arrival, even before freshman orientation concluded, my father began writing me, filling his letters with facts I was to confirm in Zimmerman Library. "Find out," he'd scrawl, "who was responsible for the massacre of the 91st Filipino Division." A month later he asked me to see if a Major Pedro L. Felix had been at Fort Benning, Georgia, on or about 12 October 1941. "What for?" I wrote back. By return mail I had an answer: "Gid mentions him twice. Maybe they met in the National Rice and Corn Corporation warehouse. I'm trying to establish a

connection. This man survived four bayonet wounds, including a gash in the intestine."

Even when he admitted himself to Providence Memorial Hospital, in El Paso, to have his gall bladder removed, Daddy wrote—and I imagine now that he did so between visits from his nurses and doctors or after my mother had fallen asleep in her chair. "I need a complete list of General Parker's II Corps headquarters staff," he said once. "Maybe you could try the War College people for me. They stopped acknowledging my inquiries last August."

Those letters, his penmanship bunched and tinier than you'd expect from a large man, were wrinkled and stained, as if he'd kept them in his pocket like Kleenex, or under his mattress; and rare was the note that said, as one did, "Disregard previous request, found info elsewhere. Now have names of stationmaster and Lubao political officer."

Near Christmas that year I told him I wouldn't do any more research. "I'm done with this," I wrote. "You can't expect this of me anymore. It's not fair."

Never had I challenged him on any issue—not what vegetables to eat, nor how a young man treats a lady, nothing—so I spent a week waiting to see him pull up in front of my dormitory in his pickup, his face alive with the rage of betrayal. Instead I got another note, this one typed and arranged as if for business.

"All's fine here (except Mother, who wants nothing more to do with me). I hope you're getting out some. The big project with me is to find somebody who knew Gid over there. Do your homework. I am proud of you. Love, your Dad."

As it happened—because of the co-op program I entered (I'm an oil engineer now) and because being away from home seemed to have given me license to explore the world—I didn't get home much. When I did, it was only for a weekend—hardly long enough, I see now, to note the effect my father's obsession had on my mother. She drank, but everybody I knew drank—Dr. Weems, my father's golfing partners at the Club, our trust officer, the cowhands working for us. Alcohol was as much a part of home life as laundry or breakfast; and alcoholics, after all, were other, less fortunate people: the poor, the lonely, the ignorant—not one's own mother. If I had been smarter, I might have seen the effect during my senior spring break, when I came down to tell them I was planning to marry Deborah, now my wife, but for years what I most remembered about those two days was the food my dad ate and the five-thousand-dollar check he forced on me.

"Do you know what your father's favorite flower is?" my mother asked that last afternoon. "The bachelor button. You wouldn't expect that, would you?"

If she was drunk, I did not know it. My thoughts were about getting back to Albuquerque before dark, and the O-Chem midterm I had to take.

"His favorite composer is Mister Bobby Worth," she said. "You know, 'Tonight We Love.' But he likes Ray Austin, too."

In a housecoat, her hair flyaway and dry-looking, Moth-

er was cleaning the silver, the candelabra, and the serving dishes, even my baby cup; most of her days were like this, I think, hours that she hoped to fill but never could. Hours that, finally, had shape and color and density. That afternoon she got up, went to the kitchen, and returned with an Army mess kit, metal and cleverly self-contained. It held a scoop of something like papier-mâché.

"Take this out to your father."

He was eating, I would discover, less than six ounces of overboiled rice once a day, the diet my uncle had survived on for two weeks before the surrender.

"It's an experiment," Daddy told me. "Don't worry, I'm not crazy."

The office was as I remembered—jammed floor to ceiling with documents, and I watched, fascinated, as he arranged himself cross-legged on the floor like a Buddha, the metal mess kit under his chin as he ate with his fingers.

"No couches in the bush," he said. "Here, you try it."

He held out, balanced on his fingertips, a lump like wallpaper paste, and without thinking I let him put it in my mouth.

"The strong had to feed the weak," he said. "Carry them, too. Sometimes they carried dead men."

The stuff was gummy, as tasteless as sand, less food than pulp.

"They'd drink from shell craters, once in a while from a stream. A couple pesos got you milk, maybe a turnip."

The rice sat in my mouth like paper. Like ash.

"You want some more?" he asked.

I didn't move, just watched him eat and listened to him describe events nearly twenty-five years old. The violence wasn't all of it, he said. The heat, heavy as wool and thick, also contributed, along with the terrain—blackened tree stumps, wallows, rice paddies, dust: a jungle that had become the moon. There was humidity like saddlecloth, and foot sores. Some men ate cane bark. You saw corpses everywhere. In the towns—Lamao, Lubao—the civilians might sneak you a mango. You marched eighteen hours; maybe you got salt, maybe you didn't. Some of the Nips had bikes; you had to run double time to keep up. You went crazy, entered mirages. You died. In the boxcars, narrow-gauge and so low you had to stoop, you were packed so tight that the sweat ran down your legs and left your shoes soggy. If you had shoes.

"I can eat this mush for only about three days," Daddy said. "Then I get the runs."

Had my father experimented in other ways to put himself in my uncle's place? Had he taken long hikes in the desert without either a hat or a shirt, trying to re-create the exhaustion and pain that Gideon must have felt? Had he emptied the tack box in our horse barn to spend a day inside it, cramped and sweaty and alone? I didn't know, didn't want to know. On the afternoon I am writing about, I was frightened—my heart in my ears, my breath ragged and hot, for it was easy to believe, though he kept telling me otherwise, that he had lost his mind, that he did not know this was 1967, or that he lived in America, or that he

was a cattle rancher, not a prisoner of war. It was possible to believe that he—like those victims of religious rapture we read about in the papers—had slipped free of himself by a truly black magic. I thought that here, in the familiar quarters of his office, he heard voices, the wet groans and shouts and nightmare whimpers of men dying around him. Here, I thought, between a window that opened toward the Mimbres Mountains and another that faced the blank, shimmering horizon that was Mexico, he saw captains and sergeants without heads or arms, privates and majors bloated black and left to rot.

"What's your position on this Vietnam thing?" he asked.

On the floor sat his tin mess kit, as clean as if our dog, Raleigh, had eaten there, and it struck me that I had no position on anything, nothing at all.

"I have a position," Daddy said, "and my position is that you steer clear of it, you understand?"

His eyes remained on me as they had when he'd begun telling me about Gideon—about our skinny-boy thighs, our dumb respect for mechanical contraptions, our rail-stiff spines—but now his eyes were saying, as eyes can, that enough was enough. A brother had died, a son would not.

"They change your classification," he was saying, "you let me know. File for CO, take drugs—I don't care—but you tell them no deal, you hear?"

I heard; yes, I did.

"From now on, you're a Communist," he said. "You're a Russian, a Chinese, anything."

Years later I learned that he had gone to my draft board the day before, in his belt the Colt pistol he took as protection when he strung barbed wire at our section line. As I heard it, Daddy told Mr. Phinzy Spalding, a lifelong friend and the board's part-time director, that Scooter Baker was not going to die in some cesspool half a world away, that Lyman Baker, Sr., himself would see to it that Scooter showed up in panties and a bra if it came to that. "I tell you, Phinzy," Daddy is supposed to have hollered in our post office, "you come after my boy, and I'll shoot his god-damn foot off myself. You know I will." What I heard is that my father, his hand on the pistol grip, stood for several minutes, trembling with anger, not two paces from Mr. Spalding, muttering again and again, as if he would for a year, the one word that seemed to make the most sense in the world he knew: no, no, no.

But he was standing in front of me now, calm as the day itself, and I wanted to say that I was twenty-one. I was in love with a tall brunette economics major from Grants. I wasn't a registered voter yet. I was a kid, I was stupid.

"You listen to me," he said. "I'm going to give you some money—a lot of money, Scooter—and when the time comes, if it does, you get out, you hear me?"

He was speaking to me, I realized, as he wished he had spoken to Gideon—big brother to little, wise man to dumb.

"You go to Sweden," he told me, his voice full of iron and the working life he loved, "go to Canada, Africa—makes no difference. You just go, you understand?"

We looked at each other, seriously and carefully. He was my father, he expected something of me, and there was a part of me that should know it. From his bent-forward shoulders and his narrowed eyes and the quiver in his cheek, I understood that all this Bataan stuff, the horror stories and the painstaking attention to detail and the grainy, timeworn photographs, had been an expression, as unmistakable as slaughter itself, of nothing so much as love and memory and death and my relation among them.



AS IT TURNED OUT, I RECEIVED A HIGH LOTTERY NUMBER when I graduated, so I missed the chance, as my father saw it, to define myself morally, to say what sort of son he'd raised. And in time, I admit, I tried to forget most of this. Deborah and I married, I took a job with Sinclair Oil in Texas for a time, and then, in 1976, just about the month our son Brian was born (he, yes, looks enough like me to look like my uncle, too), I came back here, to Deming, to work for a wildcat gas outfit named Mimbres Drilling, and to help Daddy with the ranch. Though my mother's drinking had led to her removal to Roswell, almost 250 miles away, these were good times: Deborah and I bought the split-level brick house we have, joined the Club in our own right, made friends again with those I had grown up with. In the years after he stuffed his check in my shirt pocket and gave me a breath-defeating hug, I tried to believe that my father kept his Bataan studies to himself, more or less. I assumed that he still pestered the Defense Department and the National Archives in Washington; but I also assumed—at least until a few years later, when he called to tell me to drive out to the ranch to meet somebody—that his studies were no longer so dire, nor so mad. He was a man with a hobby, I had told Deborah, like coin or stamp collecting, or knowing the Latin names of desert plants.

"I want an hour of your time," he told me that night. "Just a little unfinished business."

He was crazy, I thought. He was lonely.

"Please. Scooter. Don't fight me on this."

I have said that we had broken, my father and I, but the break was clean, not spite-filled, and could be fixed to the moment I took his money and left. We had parted, I thought. He had gone one way—backward, toward the past, toward grief—and I had gone another; and we had agreed silently, I thought, that there was an era, begun and

ended in violence, that we neither would nor could talk about again.

"You found somebody, didn't you?" I said. "Somebody who knew Gid."

"Yeah," he told me. "An officer."

"After this, no more," I told him. I felt slumped inside, as if all there was of link and snap and hook had crashed loose and lay ruined at the pit of me. "I mean it, Daddy."

"Sure," he said. "Just tonight."

The man Daddy wanted me to meet was Colonel Redmon A. Walters (U.S. Army, Ret.), who, before serving in Honduras and in the Republic of South Korea, had been in the Philippines. On the march from the West Road to San Fernando he had befriended a twenty-year-old PFC named Baker, Gideon Alan.

"They were in the same regiment," Daddy said, "the Thirty-first Infantry. Both knew Brady."

I guess Daddy already realized that Colonel Walters—"Call me Red," he said; "I'm a civilian now"—had in fact not known my uncle; or, rather, he had known my uncle in the same way you and I know the dead whose ages we are or whose places we see. Yet Red Walters was no liar; he was only a man—like my father—who had felt and heard too much, and to whom truth wasn't a thing of records and graphs and testimony. Truth was the simple elements: light and nerve, fear and hope.

"What kind of a guy was Gid?" Daddy was saying.

Red Walters sat where I usually did, so I leaned against a file cabinet and looked out the window to the part of our tool shed I could see.

"He was tough," Colonel Walters said. "Lots of guys weren't—they caved in right away—but not your brother. He was a son of a bitch, is what he was."

I was hearing them, Red and Daddy, describe an old world they regarded from opposite ends of experience, and I felt nothing. Air was air, earth earth, and way off—in time if not in place—I stood, as alien to this as I would be to affairs on Mars.

"Where exactly did you meet him?" Daddy said.

Over his shoulder I could see a copy of General Homma's personal notes, which had come from the Office of Military History in Tokyo. Near it was the volume General Wainwright had submitted to the War Department in 1946, *Report of USAFFE and USFIP in the Philippine Islands, 1941-1942*. I had read them, it seemed, in another life. In another world. With other eyes. With another brain.

"It was in Balanga," Red was saying. "Gid was part of that group in the field beyond the jail."

"Here?" Daddy pointed to a spot the size of a fingernail. It represented twelve unfenced acres in which thousands of men had been bivouacked during the march.

"Even the Japs didn't know what was up," Red said. "It was pretty confusing."

"I heard it was crazy."

"Filthy," Red Walters said. "No medical facilities, guys dying, flies everywhere. There was a kind of cloud over the place."

"He looked pretty bad, I bet."

"We all did," Colonel Walters told us. "Thin like scarecrows, and stupid-looking. Some guys couldn't remember their names. Their units. You just wanted to lie down mostly."

"What about the brutality?"

"You got used to it," he said. "You didn't complain. You shut up."

At this point I realized that Colonel Walters had not met my uncle—the odds against it, and my father's hopes, were too great—but the realization reached me slowly and without real shock, the way bad news must come to the chronically unlucky. It was old news, really. Maybe it was the news God sees, our human story told so often that it has lost its capacity either to amaze or to instruct.

"He looked like me, right?" I asked.

At that moment Colonel Walters, gray-haired and now too fleshy at the neck, came alive for me. I could imagine him as he'd once been, hollow-eyed and feeble and broken.

"Hard to tell," he said. "He could've been big once, like you."

"He had my face, though?"

"It's been a long time," he said, "I don't remember faces much anymore."

He was talking about all of them, I think. Clifford Blue-mel, Alf Weinstein, Lieutenant Henry G. Lee, Reynaldo Perez, Lieutenant Colonel William E. Chandler, the living and the dead—he was saying that he had known these and more, including the uncle I look like. Gideon was the boy there from Springfield, Missouri, and that one there from Pittsburgh, and that one way over there from Los Angeles; he was the staff sergeant hiding in the thicket, the noncom collapsed at the Blue Moon Dance Hall, in San Fernando, the captain weeping in Orani, the one sore or dehydrated or sleeping forever. And so, after I understood this, I had a glass of whisky with Colonel Walters and my father, and tried to be very quiet. They discussed horror and time; they discussed suffering and where the mind goes during battle and what a creature man is. They used words like *delirium* and *ruthless* and *hunger*—a vocabulary that seemed more appropriate to certain melodramatic books—and then, when the Johnnie Walker was gone, my daddy asked me to see Mr. Walters to his car.

"Hope I've been some help," the man said. His hand was meaty, his grip firm like a gentleman's.

"Yes," Daddy told him. "Invaluable. Thank you very much."

BESIDE HIS FORD STATION WAGON, OUR NIGHT BLACK as the cape a witch wears, I asked Colonel Red Walters how my father had gotten in touch with him.

"At William Beaumont," he said, "in Fort Bliss." Twice a year Colonel Walters was driving down from Carlsbad for checkups by the Army doctors. "There was a note on a

bulletin board," he told me. "From your dad. Said he wanted to talk to Bataan survivors who'd known his brother. The name rang a bell, so I came up."

As I watched Red Walters drive down our two-mile dirt road toward the highway, I thought about Dr. Hammond Ellis, our Episcopalian minister, and what he says about burdens—a word, as he uses it, that describes what we carry or put aside in time. We can be this or that, he preaches. Good or bad. Generous or stingy like Scrooge. Upright or craven. In any case, we have the option, gotten from our Creator (or from your own self, if that's what you believe), to change. We can be a drinker one day, a teetotaler the next. We can go from dumb to wise, wrathful to peaceful; we can believe or not, trust or not, succeed or not. But always we have that choice. So, standing beside my old, empty, and dark house, I wondered about my father. He could be crazy now, I thought, or not. Sad, or not.

"Lyman Baker, Jr.," I said to myself, "you go in there right now."

I must have sat across from him, in my customary chair, for an hour, watching him—betrayed by the lights in his eyes, and by the way he stubbed out his smokes or tugged at his earlobe—take up his life, piece by piece, his examination of himself as patient and thorough as those given to the livestock that have made him rich. I saw him, I tell you, lift up the burdens Dr. Ellis preaches about, take their measure again, and then, one by one, lay them aside. It was slow, I saw, but it was not painful; and in time he had put aside his boxer's temper and his banker's concern for numbers. He was a man with a plan now, I thought. A before B. Work and play. Then he got up, stretched, rubbed his hands, and a dozen free breaths came back to me.

"I think I'll cut down on the booze," he said. "That would be a good thing, wouldn't it?"

I thought it was and told him so.

"Maybe I'll visit your mother," he said. "It's been a long time."

That was true too.

"I'm hungry," he said. "Let's go into town, get us a steak."

He was moving now, putting on the leather jacket Deborah had given him for his sixtieth birthday, so I asked him, "What about this?"

I pointed to the books, the charts, the records, the maps—the millions of words and thousands of pictures he knew by heart. I wanted him to sweep them away, I suppose, set the whole mess aflame.

"What about it?" he said. "Just leave it."

I had my hand on a folder, one of thousands that were covered with his notes, and a thought, swift as love, came to me. So this is the end of grief, I thought. Of all his burdens, grief had gone first.

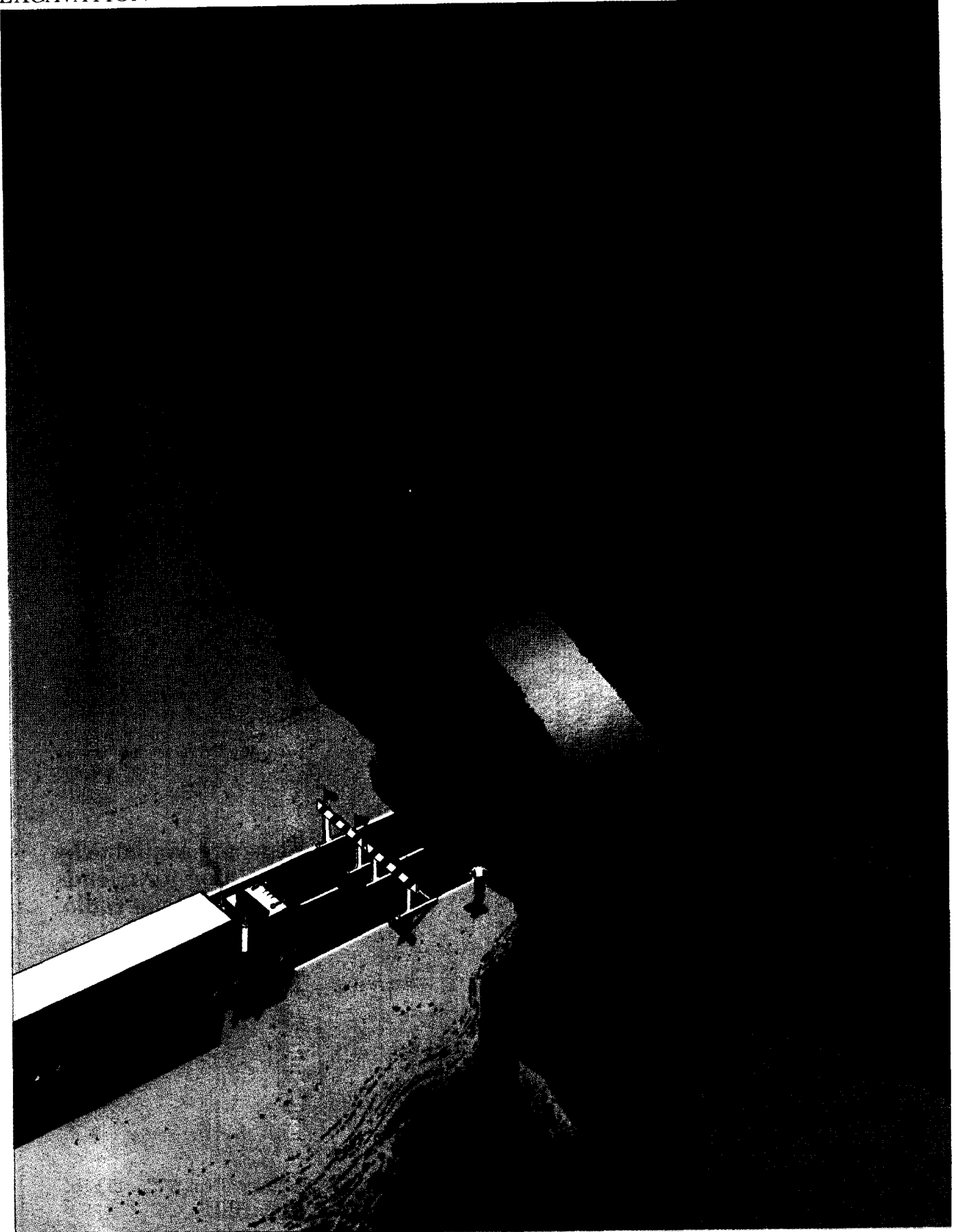
"We'll burn it tomorrow, okay?"

"Sure," he said. "Turn out the light, will you?"

I did. □

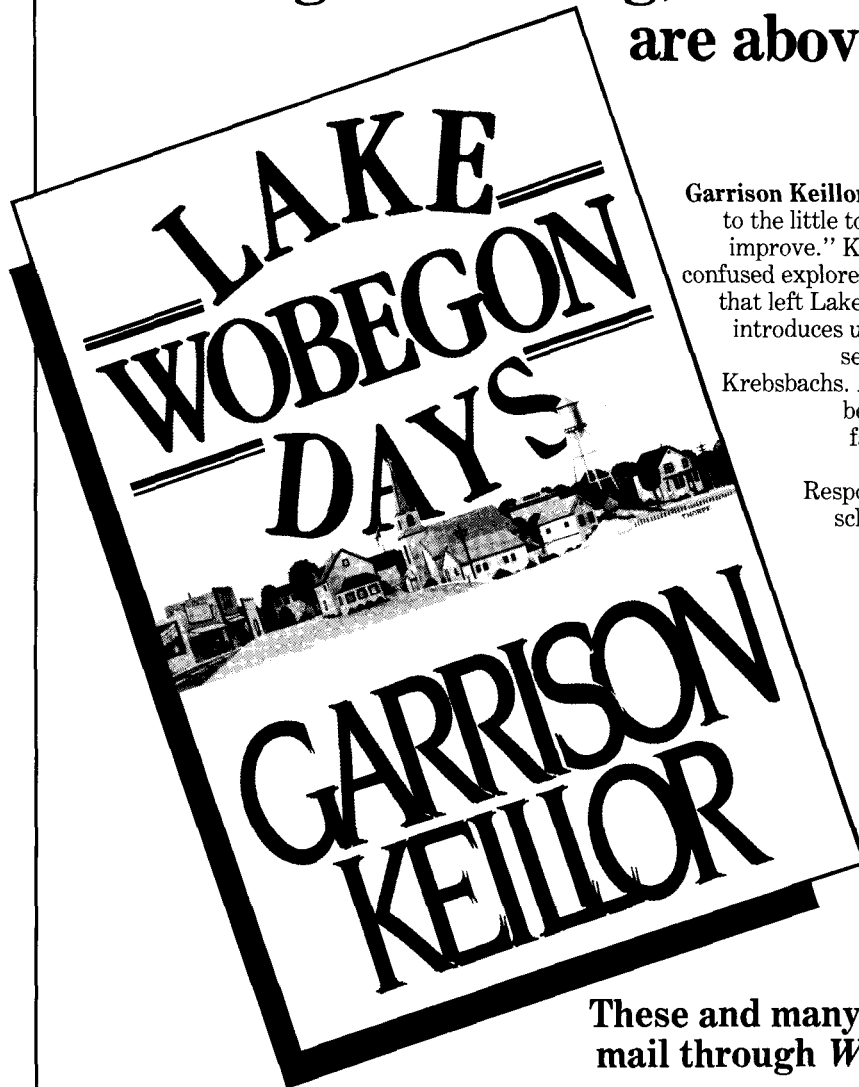
EXCAVATION

BY GUY BILLOUT



Now featured in the *Wireless* Catalog.

**Welcome to Lake Wobegon, Minnesota—
“Where all the women are strong, all the men
are good-looking, and all the children
are above average.”**

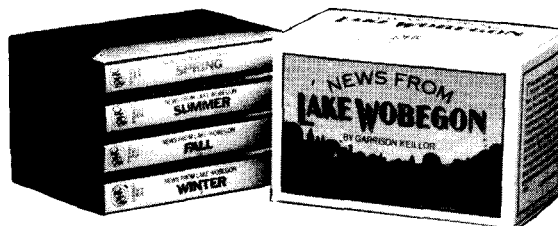


Garrison Keillor's new book, *Lake Wobegon Days*, takes us to the little town that "time forgot and the decades cannot improve." Keillor explains the town's unusual beginnings: confused explorers, passionate missionaries, a surveying error that left Lake Wobegon permanently off anyone's map. He introduces us to the German and Norwegian families that settled there, particularly the Ingqvists and the Krebsbachs. And we grow up with the narrator—a skinny, bespectacled kid from a strait-laced Protestant family—as he explores his fascination with the Catholic Church (Our Lady of Perpetual Responsibility) and the awkwardness of adolescent schooldays (his deep embarrassment at wearing black Keds; of being bullied by the football coach: "There's an animal in you and I intend to bring it out"; and his fantasies of romance with Dorene: "She turns to me with a smoky Minneapolis look . . . I ask her for a kiss").

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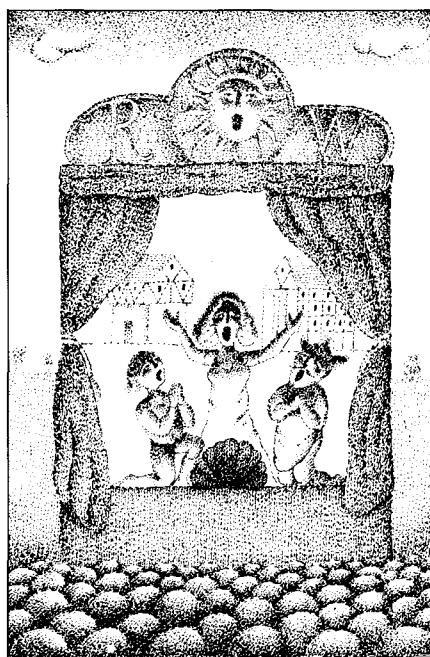
MASTERFUL MEISTERSINGER

BY WILLIAM H. YOUNGREN

WAGNER'S OPERAS ARE NOW all available on records, uncut, each of them in several splendid-sounding versions. Yet Wagner is still a very difficult composer to get to know through recordings. During the period of the greatest Wagner singing, the years between the wars, the limitations of 78-rpm records made complete recordings virtually a practical impossibility. A few superb, more or less complete performances, privately recorded either in the opera house or as they came over the radio, have survived and been issued, but the recorded sound is so poor as to put off (and mislead) any listener who does not already know the music thoroughly. Since the Second World War—or, more accurately, since the reopening of Bayreuth, in 1951—stage directors, in a misguided attempt to make Wagner “relevant” (and thus to erase all associations of his work with Nazi Germany), have resorted to ever zanier productions. The distortion of Wagner's clearly expressed intentions that has resulted from such tactics has, understandably, had a disastrous effect on singers. Wagner's operas, perhaps more than any others, were conceived as wholes—*Gesamtkunstwerke*—and the significance of the music, from individual phrases to large-scale formal structures, is primarily determined by the stage action. If that action and the scene in which it is supposed to be taking place are misrepresented, so too will the music be. Thus it is all but impossible to find in the recent complete recordings either the depth of individual characterization or the sharp and knowledgeable dramatic interplay among characters suggested by the surviving pre-war recordings, flawed as they are.

Occasionally, however, one can have the best of both worlds. There are several performances that were recorded in good postwar sound by artists who had learned their craft before the war. One of the most interesting of these perfor-

mances is the 1949 Munich *Die Meistersinger* recently issued on the Melodram label (set 428, available for \$54.90 plus \$2.00 postage and handling from German News Co., Inc., 220 East 86th Street, New York, New York 10028). The excellent conductor is Eugen Jochum, and the singers, though few of them are internationally famous, all sing very well and all know their own and the other roles thoroughly. The result is a rare blend of delight and illumination,



probably the best all-round *Die Meistersinger* ever issued. The miracle of this performance is Hans Hotter's portrayal of Sachs, surely one of the finest operatic characterizations ever captured on records and one that has, to my knowledge, never before been commercially available.

The great problem with *Die Meistersinger* has always been its first act. Act II touchingly depicts the relation between Sachs and Eva, and then leads effortlessly to the comic intrigue of Walther's and Eva's attempted elopement, Beckmesser's wooing song, and the ensuing street brawl. The first half of Act III shows us Sachs gradually bringing to re-

alization Walther's Prize Song (and with it the romance between Walther and Eva); the second half is pure, irresistible pageantry. Act I, which is mainly occupied with David's attempt to teach Walther the elaborate rules and techniques of the Mastersingers and then with Walther's failure to please the Masters with his singing, almost always seems static by comparison. Part of the reason is that Sachs, who is to dominate the work, does not even appear until the action is well under way, and that he then has very little to do. But as Hotter's performance makes clear, that little brilliantly prepares us for what is to follow.

As the Masters assemble for the *Singschule* at which Walther is to be heard and judged, the most prominent of them, Kothner and Eva's father, Pogner (sung on this recording by Karl Mücke and Max Proebstl, respectively), are rhetorical, stentorian, even pompous—as befits men of their station on such a public occasion. But Hotter's Sachs, almost from his first words, is sharply different: sensitive, personal, quietly making his presence instantly felt. After Pogner has announced that he will give his daughter's hand to the Master who wins the singing contest on the following day (but that if she refuses, she may never marry thereafter), Sachs protests that he may be going a bit far in this attempt to glorify the Masters and their art. Usually this brief protestation slips by almost unnoticed, but Hotter, intimate yet authoritative, invests it with deep concern and understanding. After Walther has sung, and has been duly reprovved by Beckmesser and the other Masters, Hotter is again eloquent as Sachs tells them that this time they are all going too far.

By characterizing Sachs so sharply right from the beginning, Hotter places all of Act I in a clearer light than usual, calling attention to its many detailed anticipations of Act III and thus making us see the whole opera as a giant arch, a satisfyingly symmetrical structure. More important, he makes the complex Sachs who emerges at the beginning of Act II not seem to have come out of nowhere. Throughout Acts II and III, Hotter, making every word and gesture count and yet never overacting, gives us a Sachs who is capable not only of the kindness, generosity, and homely wisdom traditionally associated with the role but also of sudden, intense bursts of anger and self-disgust. The two great monologues are full of beautifully modulated internal conflict, and the grief

William H. Youngren teaches English at Boston College. He writes on music regularly for The Atlantic.



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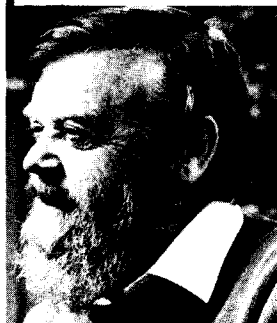
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Is Farley Mowat subversive?

On April 23, 1985, U.S. officials cited the McCarran-Walter Act—a piece of 1950's legislation aimed at dangerous subversives—in refusing to let Canadian writer Farley Mowat enter this country.

The only possible explanation, as *The Baltimore Sun* points out, is that “Farley Mowat is dangerous. He is pro-wolf and, worse, pro-seal and pro-deer. Worse, this man is a writer. Small wonder the Immigration and Naturalization Service proscribed him.”

Not that he's done anything wrong. “What Mowat *has* done,” observes the editorial page of *The Boston Globe*, “is write a book called *Sea of Slaughter* in which, with both deep feeling and sound documentation, he records the extinction of dozens of species of animal life.”



“Subversive?” asks *The Globe*. “It could be, in the eyes of the bureaucratic guardians of our borders.”

Farley Mowat has been banned. But *Sea of Slaughter*, which *The Seattle Times* describes as “the kind of ‘must’ reading that Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* once was,” refuses to be silenced. As of this writing, it can still be found in your local bookstore.

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and bitterness that Hotter gives to Sachs's reaction to the Prize Song, when Walther sings its third verse for him and for Eva in Act III, provide, for once, a fully comprehensible motivation for Eva's impassioned outburst, “*O Sachs! mein Freund!*” Describing this moment in his interesting book *Wagner and “Die Meistersinger,”* Robert M. Rayner notes cozily that Eva is “not to be taken in by [Sachs's] affectation of gruffness.” And so the scene is usually played—but not in this performance. As there is nothing affected in Sachs's inward-turning rage and frustration, so there is nothing arch in Eva's declaration that she would give herself to Sachs if she could.

SACHS, AS HOTTER portrays him, is not the kindly but wily manipulator we encounter in most performances; he is rather a character who, like Eva and Walther, grows in self-knowledge over the course of the drama. We witness, with a mixture of pain and admiration, his gradual realization and resigned suppression of his own desire for Eva, and his final energetic return to the familiar public role he has carved out for himself. The other characters are portrayed with almost equal vividness. Günther Treptow and Annelies Kupper are an ardent pair of lovers; Benno Kusche's Beckmesser is keen-spirited and full-bodied, never a mere caricature; even Fritz Richard Bender's earnest and soulful Nightwatchman is a small comic masterpiece. Jochum's pacing and shaping of the music is naturally and unaffectedly responsive throughout, and the playing of the Munich orchestra, while not technically up to the level of that found on the best recent recordings, is more than adequate.

The argument posed by *Die Meistersinger* concerns the relations between old and new, craft and inspiration, in the creation of art (and perhaps also in the living of life). The solution offered lies not in any simple-minded advocacy of inspiration and novelty over craft and tradition but rather in synthesis and compromise. Wagner was himself a far more craftsmanlike composer than he is usually made out to be, and each of his mature operas exemplifies the spirit of compromise explicitly dramatized in *Die Meistersinger*. But he is also the most difficult of great composers to do justice to, the one most easily and most frequently misrepresented. It requires a performance of this magnitude to make his message fully clear. □

SPORTS

KEEPING RECORDS ON TRACK

BY STUART STULLER

AT AN INDOOR track meet during the 1984 season Mark McGavish, a sprinter from Idaho State University, ran 500 meters in 1:01.30. The time was the fastest ever recorded for that distance, and thus apparently a world record. But for sports in which the winner is determined by the clock or measuring tape, rather than by points scored, a world record is an objective measure of greatness, a bold statement that a performance is unequivocally the best in history. Moreover, track-and-field officials are reluctant to contaminate their record-keeping with explanatory asterisks. If not all the criteria for a world record are met, no record is allowed. Mark McGavish seemed to meet all the appropriate criteria and was guilty of none of the familiar reasons for disqualification. He was not South African, professional, paced, wind-aided, or a user of steroids or of shoes with too many spikes. The meet program had McGavish's name in it, evidence that the race was run in a legitimate competition, rather than at an informal gathering of cronies. The banked, 200-meter board track had been measured and certified by engineers prior to the meet. Following the race, the automatic timing system produced a photo of McGavish crossing the finish line, with the record time superimposed on the photo. Jerry Quiller, McGavish's coach, collected the verifying signatures of the starter, the finish judge, and the clerk, all veteran officials certified by The Athletics Congress (TAC), track and field's governing body in the United States.

Then Quiller went to work filling in the standard record-verification form. "When I came to the checklist item about the curb, I decided to call [TAC] about it," he says.

The TAC official told Quiller that if McGavish had run on a track that did not have an inside curb, his time would not be considered a record. Quiller argued

that the track did not need a curb, because it was raised six inches off the floor of the field house, and centrifugal force was pulling McGavish to the outside of the lane. No matter. Rules, unlike records, are not made to be broken.

At issue was a two-inch-high strip of molding that had not been tacked to the inside of the track. "The curb intimidates," Bob Hersh, the TAC national records chairman, explains. "It's designed to inhibit runners from crowding the inside. Tracks are measured twelve inches from the inside line. If an athlete could run half an inch from the inside line, he would run a significantly shorter distance. It's always been in the rules, and I think compliance with the rules goes without saying."

"Now, that having been said, I have to tell you that the five hundred meters has been a particularly troublesome event," says Hersh, a powerful member of track's governing body and also a statistics buff. "Just by coincidence, a lot of good performances have been on tracks with no borders. In fact, the top one . . . two . . . three . . . four, five performances in history were all on tracks with no borders. The recognized record is sixth on the historical list!"

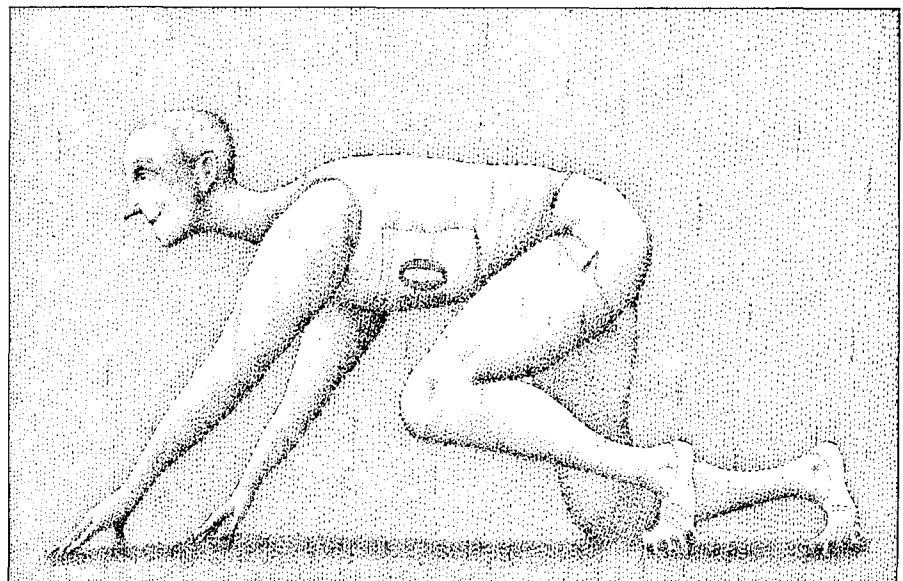
McGavish wasn't the first athlete to

have an unsurpassed effort declared a non-record. In 1968 two of the United States' top sprinters, John Carlos and Lee Evans, ran the fastest recorded times ever in the 200- and 400-meter dashes. Their times were not accepted as world records because both runners wore "brush spikes" on the bottoms of their shoes rather than the traditional six-spoke configuration.

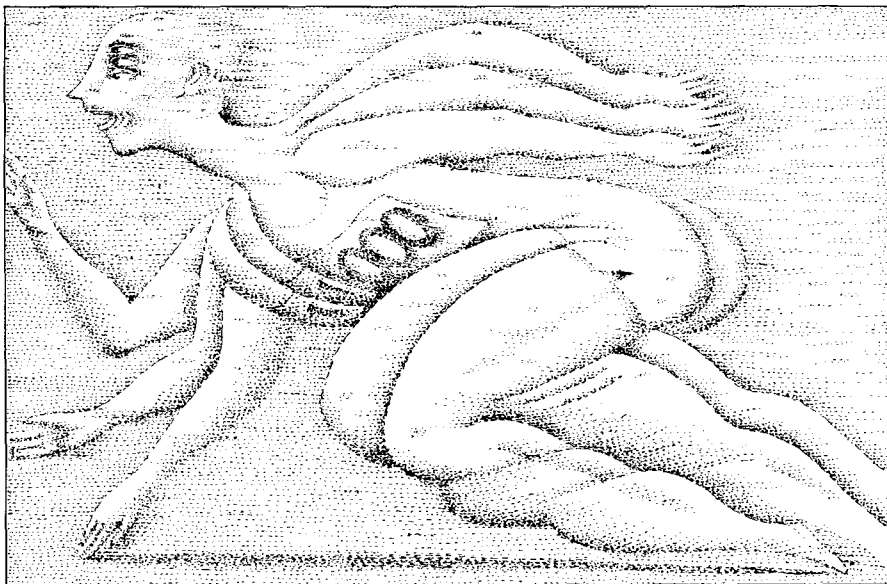
A few years later a group of athletes fed up with the sham of amateurism joined a professional track circuit. While competing as one of those professionals, Brian Oldfield, a shot-putter, recorded a heave of seventy-five feet, the longest in history. The effort was never formally accepted as a world record.

When Ingrid Kristiansen ran 5,000 meters in 14:58.89 last year, she eclipsed the recognized world record of 15:08.26, set by Mary Decker. Later, protests arose that the amount of advertising on Kristiansen's uniform exceeded the prescribed limits. Kristiansen's record sat in limbo while the issue was discussed. Never discussed was the fact that Zola Budd had already run faster than Decker in the 5,000. Budd's 15:01.83, though six seconds faster than the existing world record, was never given official recognition because South African citizens are not officially allowed to compete in internationally sanctioned racing events. Eventually Kristiansen's record was accepted, a small nod toward the financial realities of track and field.

In 1984 Fernando Mamede ran a world-record time in the 10,000 meters using a variation on the illegal but widely tolerated "rabbit" strategy, in which one runner paces another, early in the



Stuart Stuller, a two-time national small-college champion in gymnastics, has written for several magazines on sports subjects.



race, in order to force a faster—and perhaps record-setting—effort. Instead of pacing Mamede through the early laps and then dropping off, the rabbit ran slowly at the beginning of the race. After twenty-odd laps the rabbit suddenly picked up the tempo and paced Mamede, the leader, through the difficult final laps. Mamede's record was eventually accepted, and the rabbit rule was officially dropped.

THE INTERNATIONAL Amateur Athletic Federation (IAAF) is track and field's only worldwide authority, and as such it is the only organization legitimately able to declare outstanding distances, heights, or times to be track-and-field "world records."

New IAAF records are relatively rare. The IAAF does not recognize a world record in the hundred-yard dash, or in any race at a non-metric distance except the mile. Off-track races, such as the twenty- and fifty-kilometer race walks and the marathon, are not considered world-record events by the IAAF. Nor are track performances indoors, although that situation may change after the IAAF holds its first indoor world championships, in 1987.

Measuring up to IAAF standards is not easy. At the 1983 National Sports Festival, in Colorado Springs, the sprinters Calvin Smith and Evelyn Ashford ran world-record times in the men's and women's hundred-meter dashes. The morning after the competition the meet director, Bob Green, remeasured the distance between the start and finish lines with a steel tape measure. Green found the lanes to be a few centimeters

too long, certainly not grounds for disallowing a record.

However, Green's measurements, along with the original survey of the track, were not adequate to meet the IAAF's stringent standards of certification. Before TAC could process the paperwork and forward it to the IAAF's London office for ratification, a fully equipped survey crew had to be commissioned to certify that Smith and Ashford had run on a legal course. "It doesn't make sense to keep records unless you're playing on a level field—literally," Hersh says. The survey crew found the course to be a few centimeters longer than a hundred meters, and level. The records were approved.

Unfortunately, some things are not as easily remeasured as the distance between two points. At the 1978 Pacific 10 conference track-and-field championships, Mike Tully, a pole-vaulter, cleared a crossbar set at eighteen feet, eight and three-quarters inches. However, before the height of the crossbar could be verified, a meet official jostled the upright and dislodged the crossbar. Whether the bar had actually been at record height when Tully cleared it could never be determined to the satisfaction of the IAAF.

Tully's vault, like John Carlos's 200-meter dash, drifted over into the realm of "world's best" performances, as opposed to "world-record" performances. The phrase "world's best" is finding its way into the lexicon of sportswriters, who have used the phrase "world record" in a general sense for years.

"A world's best," Hersh says, "is an informal recognition arrived at by expert

consensus because there is no authority in the area."

Though the IAAF is the only true source of track-and-field world records, the magazine *Track & Field News* is the leading source of world's bests. The self-proclaimed "Bible of the Sport" provides a haven for record times in the 100-, 200-, 400-, and 800-meter runs, as well as records for indoor performances.

Mark McGavish's record-setting time has found sanctuary on *Track & Field News*'s "All-Time Indoor List." But informal lists kept by statisticians are not without their quirks. In 1979 Herman Frazier ran a 500-meter race in 1:01.2, one tenth of a second faster than McGavish's time. "But that was hand-timed," explains Dave Johnson, who compiles the list for the magazine.

"Intrinsically, we would consider the 1:01.30 to be better, based on statistical probability. Because of human reaction factors, the likelihood is that if the 1:01.2 had been automatically timed, it would have been around 1:01.34. We know from statistical samples, and not really enough, that in the longer races the hand time will be about fourteen one-hundredths of a second shorter. So if you add that fourteen one-hundredths to 1:01.2, you get 1:01.34."

Still, *Track & Field News* is no more interested in confusing the reader than are newspaper reporters, so Johnson lists Frazier's time ahead of McGavish's on the magazine's "All-Time Indoor List." Significantly, the introduction to the list says that the top time in each event may be considered a "World Record."

Johnson is careful to point out that *Track & Field News* is not thumbing its nose at the IAAF but performing a different function for the track community. "You want your records set under conditions of extremely high scrutiny. But when we look at the practicalities of compiling a list, we want to present an overall picture of the true depth of the event. If you start being as nitpicky as you are with records, you're going to eliminate a lot of things."

IF RECORDS ON the track are difficult to log accurately, records set on the road are impossible. Marathon times have never been recognized as world records by the IAAF, because of the inherent difficulties of comparing performances on different courses, where the topography and the number of turns may vary. Not until 1924 was a standard distance adopted for the marathon: 42,195 me-

ters. (This was the distance between Windsor Castle and the stadium where the 1908 Olympics took place, rather than the distance between the plain of Marathon and the city of Athens.)

In 1969 Derek Clayton ran the Antwerp Marathon in two hours, eight minutes, and thirty-four seconds—at that point the fastest time ever recorded for any marathon. The validity of Clayton's time soon became the subject of lively debate, because of the European habit of measuring marathon courses by automobile instead of measuring wheel. Automobiles, the critics pointed out, cannot cut corners as sharply as runners and are legally bound to remain in their proper traffic lanes, whereas runners are free to carve the tightest course possible. Before the Antwerp course could be accurately remeasured, the streets of Antwerp had been torn up and changed.

The debate over Clayton's mark lasted until the running of the 1981 New York Marathon, when Alberto Salazar crossed the finish line twenty-one seconds ahead of Clayton's time. Salazar's 2:08:13 gained immediate acceptance as the "world record"—but only in the general sense, of course.

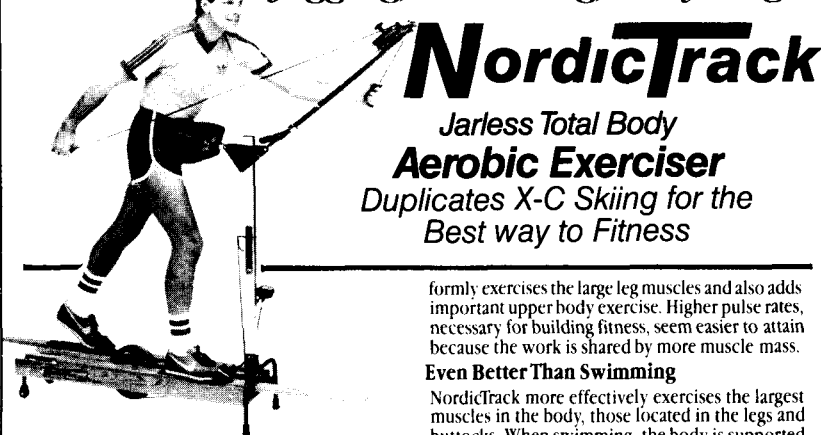
However, last November officials from the National Running Data Center, which certifies all road-racing records, discovered that cones that were meant to guide the runners through Central Park had not been in place on race day, 1981. A remeasurement of the route available to Salazar showed the course to be 148 meters short of the official marathon distance.

Fortunately for Salazar, he'd had three years at the top, and his record had already been broken, in October of 1984, by Steve Jones, a Welshman, at the Chicago Marathon, on a course that proved to be sixty-five meters too long.

Whereas Salazar's record was erased from the lists of statisticians and replaced by Rob de Castella's 1981 Fukuoka Marathon time of 2:08:18 (on a course traditionally measured with a 100-foot-long bamboo pole), Jones's time, 2:08:05, was not amended to show that he had broken the marathon's 2:08 barrier, although in all likelihood he had.

Despite the seeming clarity of the phrase "world record," objective measurements, like subjective evaluations, are fallible. But that may not be a bad thing for track and field. Would baseball be as interesting if the record books said that Roger Maris hit more home runs than Babe Ruth and left it at that? □

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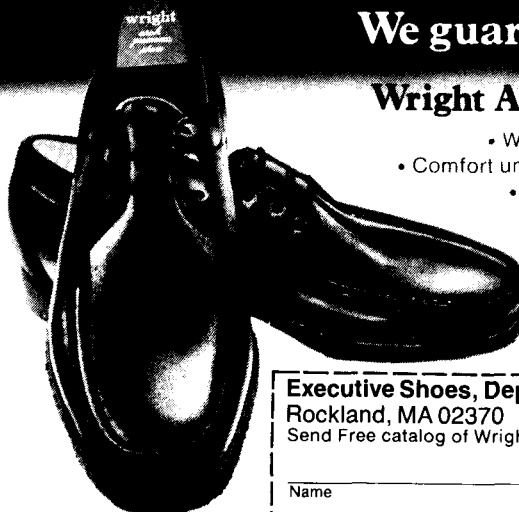
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TRAVEL

EAST SIDE, WEST SIDE

BY HEIDI LANDECKER

WHEN I LIVED IN West Berlin, two years ago, I couldn't get enough of the Wall; I had to see every angle it made. I followed its graffiti-strewn facade on foot as far as I could, leaving it only where back yards or fences blocked my way, inspecting every chink I could get close to. I found streets that ran adjacent to the Wall, with signposts at the intersections of cross-streets, as if there were no barricade a few feet away. I took a bus to the "suburb" of Steinstücken, a tiny exclave that hangs like a willful rose into East Germany. Gardens abutted the border, and a family picnicked near the concrete, their bicycles propped against it. I took a tour boat on a lake, where each of a string of white buoys bore the warning "*Achtung! Sektorgrenze!*" and I realized that the Wall even parted the waters. Affluent West Berliners sailed along, unmindful. I crossed the border frequently to visit East Berlin, and eventually—after the process had grown familiar (the wait, the quick search of my belongings)—the Wall stopped seeming tragic or fearsome or even sad. It was merely the oddest structure that I had ever seen. To understand Berlin you must appreciate the Wall. You needn't like it, but it should at least make you curious.

Berlin lies a hundred miles from the West German border, three quarters of the way across East Germany toward Poland. Nonetheless, the city is easy to visit. The West German government subsidizes air travel to the pre-war German capital, so round trips from anywhere in the country cost less than a hundred dollars. When I visit the city, I avoid the big hotels, although I know that the Kempinski is elegant and the Excelsior is comfortable. Instead I stay in a pension off the Kurfürstendamm, the main shopping avenue in town. (Berliners, who irreverently nickname streets and buildings, call it the Ku'damm.) I like the pensions because they remind me of a naive and hopeful time; most were once

stately apartments of the Weimar bourgeoisie. The one I visit has a wide, curving marble staircase, a birdcage lift, and tall stained-glass windows. I enjoy its dining room, where damask tablecloths reach to the floor.

If you go to Berlin, you, like me, will probably be eager to visit the Wall. You will perhaps be a little embarrassed by this impulse; it is a feeling akin to wanting to view an accident that you have passed along the highway. Catch a dou-



ble-decker bus, number 69, heading east along the Ku'damm; if you sit upstairs, you will have a fine view of the city. Get off at the Reichstag building, once the seat of the German parliament, today a museum of German history. Climb the platform at the museum's south side and look over at the Brandenburg Gate, now in East Berlin. East German guards in their watchtowers will observe you with binoculars, which will make you uneasy. But don't worry. You are only one among thousands of tourists who have climbed that platform since the Wall went up more than twenty years ago, and you are seeing what you must to understand Berlin: over *there* lay

the city's cultural center, and the astounding, labyrinthine structure before you cuts off West Berlin from its natural heart. (Imagine Washington, D.C., with a high concrete partition between the Capitol and the Mall.) If this disturbs you, go back to the Ku'damm and have a tall German beer at, for example, Hardtke's pub, near the corner of Meinekestrasse. Try the bratwurst or, if you are brave, the pig's trotters. You will be able to cross the Wall and visit the rest of the city (or, truly, the other city), but first you can devote your attention to the pleasure of West Berlin. A Berliner I know once told me, "I *like* the Wall. Whenever I'm depressed, I can go and walk along it and be glad that I'm living on this side!"

WEST BERLIN, BECAUSE of its location and its history, is an ad for capitalism. Frivolity is part of its Weimar legacy, and there are still all-night jazz clubs and lively cabarets. It is also a refined and comfortable city, with, for example, the best symphony orchestra in the land. "Excess" seems to be West Berlin's motto. Visit KaDeWe, the city's largest department store, and take the escalator to its food section, on the top floor. Look up into the rafters: never again in your life will you see so many different kinds of sausages. Or visit the Dahlem cultural and ethnographic museums, but be prepared to spend days, for the collections are immense. Walk through the acres of parks and forest (West Berlin is almost three times larger than the District of Columbia), stopping at one of the ubiquitous outdoor pubs—the traditional German beer gardens. You can sit in the shade and listen to the prattle of the old folks, a cosmopolitan people at once sophisticated and sentimental. Old women wearing velveteen hats will sip tall beers and talk softly, and you will realize that there are far more of them than there are old men, and you'll think about why. They have lost a lot, it may seem to you, but they have surely made the best of it, here in this gaudy oasis of a city.

And from where else in the world can you take a subway to another country?

Westerners can pass through the checkpoints freely for a day's visit to East Berlin. By subway you will cross at Friedrichstrasse station, where you simply get off the train and go through customs. In a car or on foot, cross at Checkpoint Charlie, which is near the Kochstrasse subway station. I do not

Heidi Landecker is a copy editor for The Boston Globe Magazine.

know any Americans who weren't nervous the first time they went to East Germany, but the border crossing is something one gets used to. You will wait in a line to show your passport. You will be asked to change twenty-five West marks (they purchase about seven dollars' worth of Western goods) into twenty-five East marks (they will buy your dinner and the best seats in the opera house). You will be charged a five-mark "street-use fee" and will receive a day visa, which means that you must return to West Berlin before midnight. I have never wanted to test the penalty by breaking this rule, and advise obedience. You may be asked to show the contents of a briefcase or a purse, and your car may be searched. (This happens regularly during the return crossing.) Most guidebooks advise you not to carry Western periodicals, but the last time I crossed at Checkpoint Charlie none of the guards objected to my *Wall Street Journal* or to *zitty*, West Berlin's entertainment weekly. Use discretion, of course. Unless you are carrying a hundred pairs of designer jeans, it should take no more than twenty minutes to clear the hurdles.

The best buy in a communist country is high culture, and as a foreigner you will often have access to the best seats at the opera or the symphony, right up to the time of performance. To advertise the availability and excellence of state-supported arts, tickets will nearly always have been set aside for someone like you. The State Opera house and the Comic Opera are lit almost every evening. Sets are elaborate and colorful, and the singing is superb. During intermission at the State Opera small round tables in a lounge full of mirrors will be set with the sandwiches and champagne you ordered before the performance. It is no different from operagoing in the West, until you notice your loge-mates: they could be a couple of smartly decorated Russian generals.

Food can be a disappointment, unless you dine at Ganymed, Ermelerhaus, or the Operncafé. Each of these restaurants provides substantial fare in a comfortable setting, but do not expect everything on the menu to be available. Allow extra time for dinner, because service will probably be slow.

Compared with an American city, East Berlin seems utterly still. A few small Russian-made Ladas zip by along the boulevards, but there are far fewer cars and people about than in the heart

of a Western city. Strolling east along Unter den Linden—once Berlin's most elegant promenade—you will pass the city's most impressive buildings: Humboldt University, the Pergamon Museum, the Altes Museum. From the breadth of the boulevard and the grandeur of the design you will recognize that this was the core of a perfectly planned city: here was Berlin's Champs Elysées. Look west, however, and you will see that the street dead-ends at the Wall. Turn your back on it and follow Unter den Linden on toward Alexanderplatz, passing shops, bookstores, restaurants, and cafés. There is something strange about them; they do not beckon. Slowly you realize that the colors are different. Labels, book covers, and clothes are paler, softer; nothing is bright. Suddenly you may feel like the protagonist in a science-fiction story, as if you had just stepped twenty or thirty years back in time. There in the plaza stands an observation tower that resembles the Seattle space needle. The models of the cars are all the same: they look like little Studebakers. There is a pre-technology aura to the place that is at once peculiar and calm. No hustling, no hawking of wares, no pushiness. If you take a ride on the elevated commuter train (built in 1871, the year Bismarck created the German empire) to a residential section of town, you can pretend you've slipped back a century. Board it in the great glass station at Alexanderplatz and take it out to Schönhauser, where stately gargoyle apartment houses line the streets and *Alleen*. Watch the lights coming on in the dormers, the shops closing down for the night. Imagine yourself in Old Europe, before there were automobiles, skyscrapers, world wars. Once, during just such a flight of fancy, expecting to see a horse-drawn milk cart at any moment, I rounded a corner; and there, coming toward me on the cobblestones, gleaming white and shiny, was a Corvette. In East Berlin you never know when your expectations are going to be defied.

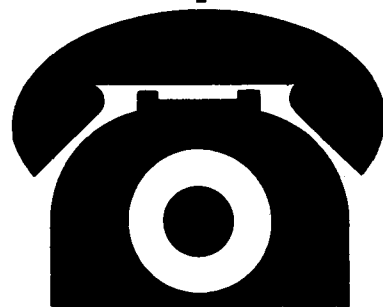
WHEN I AM IN Berlin I think of spies and think I am one: all dressed up in a trench coat and dark glasses, snooping through the trappings of an alien philosophy. Probably nowhere else in the world can you feel the conflicts and dramas of this century as acutely as you can in Berlin. It is the most challenging of European cities; and you wonder sometimes if your mind can stretch wide enough to enclose its extremes. □

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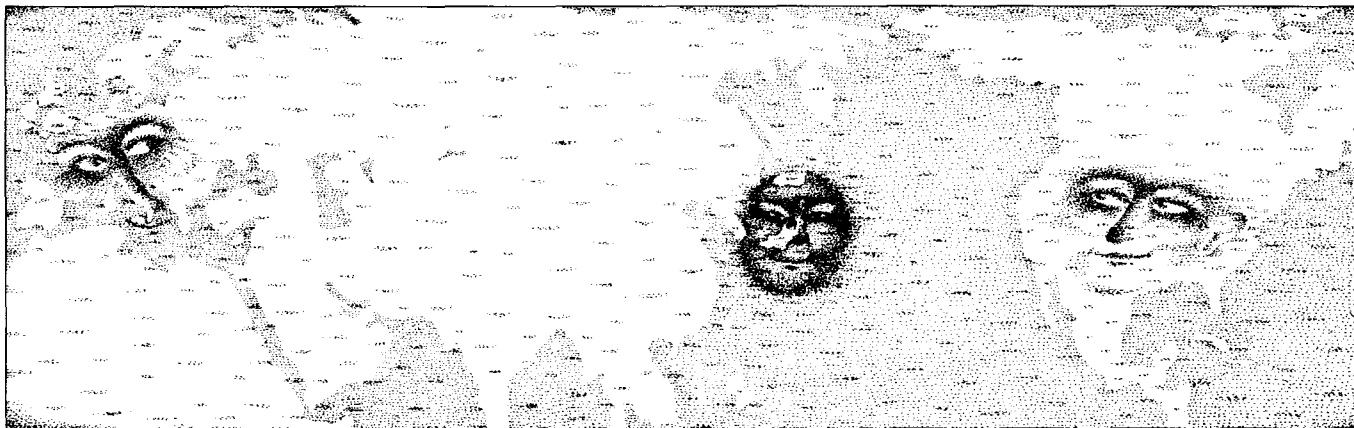
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BOOKS



HOW TO SUCCEED IN JAPAN

BY JAMES FALLOWS

TRIAD POWER: The Coming
Shape of Global Competition
by Kenichi Ohmae. Free Press, \$19.95.

AS THE UNITED STATES has grown accustomed to eating Japan's dust in economic competition, a "Remember Pearl Harbor" spirit has been stirring in the American breast. In part, Japan is merely a handy target for America's general exasperation about competing against the low-wage, hard-work quarters of the world. First the Japanese underbid us on steel and cars, then the Koreans and Taiwanese got into the picture; God knows what will happen when a billion Chinese enter the world labor market, willing to work for pennies a day. But there is also a specifically anti-Japan aspect to the indictment, which emphasizes the many well-publicized tricks through which the Japanese deny a market to perfectly worthy American wares. Somewhere in our collective unconscious we seem to be rerunning all those Second World War movies, in which fiendishly grinning Japanese soldiers are always either launching kamikaze raids or laying traps for the square-dealing GIs. Even if American producers were to pick their way through the tariffs and trade barriers that encircle Japan, they would (according to the current Pearl Harbor mentality) find no fa-

vor among Japanese consumers, who are always willing to pass up foreign bargains as part of their personal sacrifice for the greater good of Nippon.

Kenichi Ohmae, a Japanese business expert who directs the Tokyo office of McKinsey & Company, a consulting firm, has written a book that puts the competition between the United States and Japan in quite a different light. The implications of his findings could not exactly be called cheering, but at least they are a change from the most familiar arguments about economic warfare and world trade.

The "Triad" of the book's title refers to the three powerhouses of the world's economy: the United States, Western Europe, and Japan. Ohmae might just as well have used a more familiar term, such as "industrialized democracies" or "rich countries," because his starting point is to show that these countries are becoming more different from the rest of the world while they are becoming more similar to one another.

The most obvious similarity among these nations is the convergence of their consumers' tastes. People in Tokyo, Los Angeles, and Milan—especially young people—are likely to be driving, wearing, and coveting the same things. "Except for the language and hair color, you can't tell the nationality of a youngster in Tokyo's Harajuku who walks around in Nike sneakers, L.L. Bean shorts, and an Izod sport shirt," Ohmae says, in one of his numerous illustrations of the internationalization of brand names. But the more fundamental similarity among the industrialized societies is that despite their obvious social inequalities and impoverished classes, on the whole they are quite rich. Not only do many of their

people have the cash to spend on Sony Walkmans and IBM Personal Computers but the cultures themselves are set up in such a way that a continual stream of new products makes economic and cultural sense. Everyone has a telephone; everyone has been to school; everyone is busy and craves convenience, stimulation, and fast food. People expect to have new desires aroused and satisfied.

The affluence of the industrial nations obviously leads them to consume the lion's share of the world's goods. But Ohmae goes on to say that the same characteristics that foster consumption—the highly refined communications and transport systems, the advanced level of education—also give the rich nations a tremendous edge as producers. For that reason, he says, the flow of assembly plants to the Indonesias and Haitis of the world may be drying up. The main force working against poor countries is that low-wage, low-skill labor matters less and less to the fastest-growing industries. "True, labor costs in developing nations still are only one-third as high as in developed nations," Ohmae says.

However, now that the direct labor content in competitive companies represents less than 10 percent of total manufacturing costs, the advantage gained by using cheap labor is offset by the costs of transporting critical components to the production site from developed countries . . . and the costs of insuring the finished products and transporting them to major markets.

Even worse, from the developing countries' point of view, as the pace of innovation has stepped up, companies have placed greater emphasis on having their production facilities close at hand,

James Fallows is the Washington editor of *The Atlantic*.

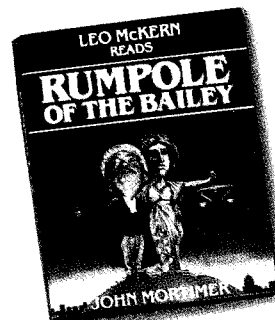
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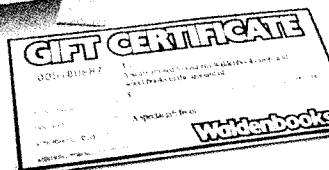
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ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

where they can control the quality and quickly shift production. Ohmae says,

Consumer and office electronics has become largely a fashion industry, where "booms" are normally short-lived, and certainly a production location remote from the location of the core engineering group has become very inconvenient. As a result, the attractiveness of producing goods in developing countries . . . has almost disappeared.

At the same time that the Triad nations are widening the gap between themselves and everyone else, Ohmae says, they are evolving an informal entente about dividing productive labor among themselves. The American nightmare is that someday soon every car in the world will be made by Toyota and every computer by Nippon Electric. But Ohmae demonstrates that there are severe limits on the inroads that foreign producers, especially those from Japan, can make on other countries' markets.

This idea may seem a little hard to swallow when you consider that last year the flow of goods from Japan to the United States was worth at least \$30 billion more than the goods going the other way. But, according to Ohmae, Japan's spectacular successes in a few very visible areas—cars, stereos, watches—give a distorted idea of its productivity and potential. Because of the likes of Honda, Sony, and Seiko, "the Western world has the false impression that all Japanese industries, and *therefore management*, are competitive and generally successful." But Ohmae says that only about one seventh of the Japanese work force is employed in industries that are competitive by international standards.

They are mainly assembly industries, characterized by mass production, with the possible exception of steel-making. Thus, overall, Japan's "power" is limited to a few industries. This structural weakness of Japan, which has existed all along, is not well understood either by foreigners or by the Japanese.

Even in these competitive areas Japan's penetration has not been so great as is usually assumed. The nine Japanese automakers can produce small cars at about half the cost of such cars to American and European manufacturers. Still,

the highest [foreign] penetration achieved by any of the nine companies has been Nissan's 6 percent in the United Kingdom, only one fifth of

its share at home. Toyota's biggest success is in the United States, where it [also] has 6 percent of the market.

One of the reasons that Toyota has been stuck at six percent of the U.S. market, of course, is the "voluntary quotas" of 1.68 million cars a year that the Japanese manufacturers agreed to in 1981, as a way to keep the U.S. Congress from enacting more-stringent involuntary quotas. Ohmae hardly endorses protectionism, but he takes it as a business fact of life that rich and poor nations alike will put some limits on the flow of foreign goods. The inevitability of at least mild protectionism is one reason that, according to Ohmae, successful companies must learn to become "insiders" wherever they operate. But he says there is a more important reason: the increasing volatility of technology, tastes, and markets means that companies must burrow themselves into the culture and distribution system of each Triad society if they hope to succeed. American companies must become insiders in Japan—and he claims that it is perfectly possible for them to do so, if they stop whining about unfair rules of play.

FOR AMERICAN readers, the most surprising material in Ohmae's book will be his account of the many American companies that have become insiders and flourished in Japan. The Shaklee pharmaceutical firm, for example, perceived that vitamin pills, which in Japan had traditionally been sold at drug-stores, were not legally classified as drugs, and could therefore be sold directly to the consumer, through the door-to-door approach the firm had relied on in America. The Japanese drug companies watched, seemingly paralyzed, as Shaklee cornered the vitamin market. They were reluctant to imitate its direct-sales approach, for fear of offending the distribution chains on which they still depended for sales of prescription drugs. Schick razors crushed their established Japanese competitors and, according to Ohmae, "succeeded in changing the shaving habits of the nation—from evening in *ofuro* (bath) to the morning with their spray foam." Japanese grocery stores now feature products from Del Monte, Nabisco, and Beatrice Companies. IBM has 15,000 of its own employees in Japan, and it recently moved its Pacific region headquarters, along with several hundred staff members, to Tokyo from the United States.

Coca-Cola dominates the Japanese soft-drink market, and the proliferation of successful food chains—McDonald's, Kentucky Fried Chicken, Shakey's, Mister Donut, and 7-Eleven—has led some Japanese to argue that the United States is bent on debauching the Japanese palate through junk food. "If one looks at the unprecedented speed of change in dietary habit of a nation as big as 120 million in population, one might be led to believe in the 'American conspiracy' theory," Ohmae writes.

Nearly all the success stories involve companies that have taken the trouble to understand what the Japanese are like and what they want, instead of willing them to desire American-style goods in American styles and sizes. Ohmae says that American refrigerator companies initially ran into trouble, because their standard models seemed gargantuan when placed in tiny Japanese kitchens and because the exhaust fans blew at floor level, where most Japanese preferred to sleep. American automakers have traditionally pushed left-hand-drive cars in Japan, as if in hopes that the Japanese would abandon their folly of driving on the wrong side of the road. Mister Donut and McDonald's altered the sizes and formulas of their wares (gradually readjusting them toward the American ideal over the years). Barbie dolls took off only after their bustlines were reduced and their hair and eyes modified to look more plausibly Japanese.

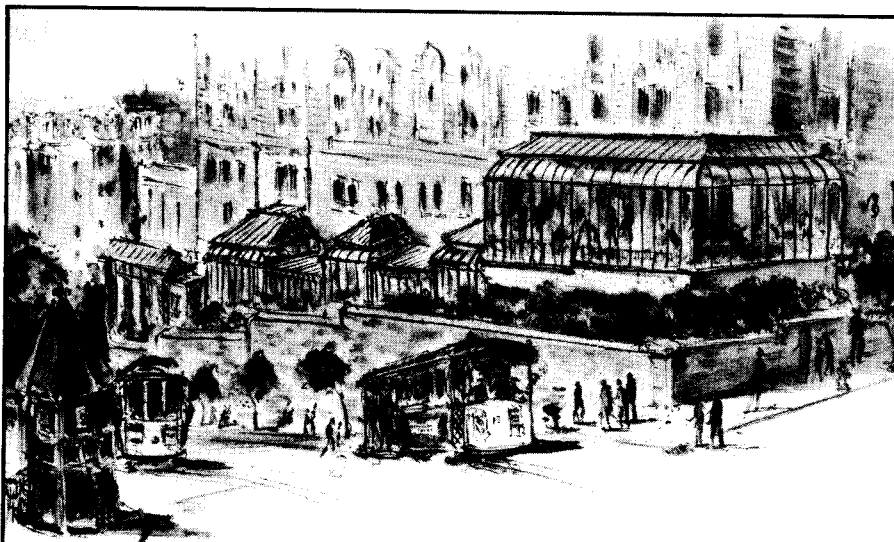
A few foreign companies—IBM, Kodak, Nestlé—are big enough to try to become insiders on their own, but, Ohmae says, the great majority of the success stories involve partnerships with enterprises in Japan. General Foods allied itself with Ajinomoto, a Japanese food producer, and used Ajinomoto's well-established distribution system to promote Maxwell House instant coffee, which by 1982 accounted for 25 percent of the Japanese market. Allstate Life Insurance was thwarted by the quintessential protectionist rule, a requirement that any new entrant to the business prove that its activities would not disrupt existing firms. The company evaded the rule by going into business with the Seibu Group. "Allstate not only acquired a powerful sales channel through this alliance with the retailer, but it also fulfilled the stringent entry requirements by bringing something new to customers—buying insurance over-the-counter." Even the mighty

IBM is involved in dozens of cooperative ventures with Japanese semiconductor and electronics companies. So is Texas Instruments, which has become the leading semiconductor producer in Japan and in the world.

When these partnerships and joint ventures are taken into account, Ohmae says, the trade balance between the United States and Japan looks less skewed than it usually appears to be. The official U.S. trade deficit—Japanese exports to the United States, minus U.S. exports to Japan—was \$30 billion or more last year, a figure that seems even worse when you consider that total American exports to Japan were only \$26 billion. But when the sales of American-owned affiliates based in Japan are included (along with those of Japanese affiliates in the United States), the imbalance is less than \$10 billion—\$67 billion for the Japanese versus \$57 billion for the Americans. This still may not be ideal from the American point of view, but it presents a far less catastrophic prospect. Last year the average Japanese consumer spent \$481, or five percent of his income, on goods imported from the United States or made by American-owned firms. The average American spent \$287, just two percent of his income, on Japanese-made or -owned products.

TRIAD POWER is really a self-help how-to book for businessmen, designed to preach the importance of joint ventures and consortia as means for companies to become "insiders" overseas. But like another how-to book, the legendarily successful *In Search of Excellence*, it also raises serious questions for non-businessmen.

One is about the seemingly inevitable growth of inequality between the Triad—the United States and its industrialized allies—and the rest of the world. The Triad companies that are now in the greatest trouble, Ohmae says, are those that wasted their time building subsidiaries in Latin America and Africa. The economies there are so soft and stagnant that the companies themselves, enervated like old colonial hands, have grown unfit for major-league competition. If Ohmae is right, what will it mean for the world's politics and sense of ethical rightness when we accept as a settled fact, not as a painful transition stage, that most of the world's former colonies (with the exception of several in Southeast Asia) will be places of comparative misery and privation through the life-



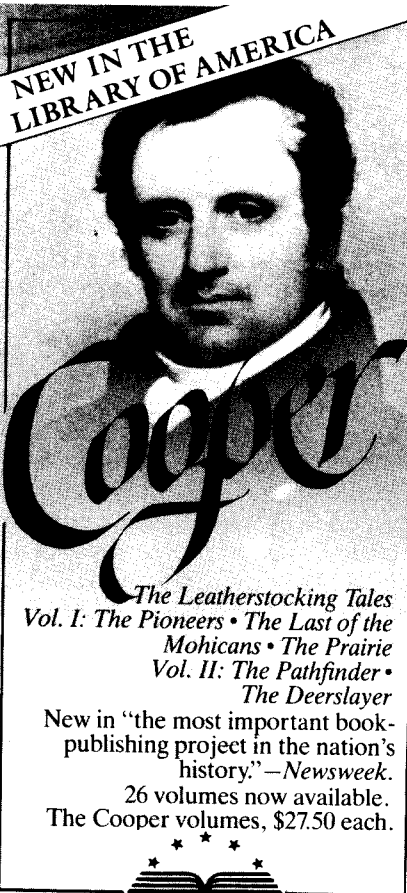
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times of everyone now born? The poverty in Guatemala and Mali is bad enough when their people can entertain the hope that someday it will end. What will we—and they—do when even the hope is gone?

A second question concerns an economic problem that cooperative Triad ventures will not solve, even if they work exactly as Ohmae prescribes. When Texas Instruments makes semiconductors in its marvelous plant in Miho, Japan, it adds to the health and prosperity of the American corporate community—but to someone looking for a job in Cleveland, not Miho, what's the difference between a Japanese factory owned by TI and one more straightforwardly under Nippon Electric's control? Both companies are paying wages to people on the other side of the globe. Yes, the profits that American firms earn through their subsidiaries and joint ventures may eventually be repatriated and help buoy the American economy. At a minimum, it's better to have American firms sharing the profits from foreign production than to have no share at all. But does Ohmae's vision of a Japan open and beckoning to "insiders"—even if plausible—really amount to a practical improvement over the closed, hostile Japan we more usually hear described?

I met Ohmae in Washington after reading his book and asked him this question. The first thing he said was that even now most Japanese would be amazed to hear that there was such a thing as a problem with displaced American workers. No one in Japan writes about it, no one cares or thinks about it. The situation is similar, he said, to Americans' total indifference to the plight of Japan's rice farmers—who represented almost half the Japanese working population only a generation ago and who now extort phenomenal price supports from the Japanese government (rice subsidies rank third in national expenditures, after health insurance and the national railway) by constantly threatening to throw their votes to the Communists. In part, the displaced-worker problem seems irrelevant in Japan because the Japanese have already boiled so many people out of their own heavy industries. All the Japanese automakers combined, who produce more than 13 million cars and trucks a year, employ only 670,000 people—which is less than the work force GM alone employed in 1983 to produce 7.7 million cars and trucks.

But Ohmae's real point, made in behalf of himself and his country, was "Don't blame us." Our closed markets didn't kill the steel mills and take away the auto jobs, he said; our "Japan, Inc." cooperation between business and government didn't give us an unfair advantage. You, he said, are the ones to blame: your executives, for giving up the fight and refusing to adapt and produce higher-quality products; your government, for tolerating ever-higher deficits, which have in turn run up the dollar and nearly priced American manufacturers out of the worldwide market. We Japanese should pay more attention to your political and social problems of readjustment—but no one can make your products competitive except yourselves.

No less than Americans, Japanese like Ohmae know the pleasures of pointing the finger at someone else. It's so much less satisfying for us, as Americans, to think about balancing federal accounts or adapting to changing markets than to point at perfidious Nippon and yell "foul." □

WOMEN WRITERS AND FEMINIST CRITICS

BY PHYLLIS ROSE

THE NORTON ANTHOLOGY OF
LITERATURE BY WOMEN:
The Tradition in English
*edited by Sandra M. Gilbert
and Susan Gubar. Norton, \$28.95.*

AT MORE THAN 2,000 pages and over two pounds, *The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women* is not in any sense to be taken lightly. Intended as a textbook for courses in women's literature, it is likely to be widely used, because of the prestige of its editors, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, in the field of women's studies, and because of the prestige of the Norton anthology series in university literature departments. Our daughters and granddaughters will lug this book home on vacations from college.

Phyllis Rose recently spent six months in Paris doing research for a biography of Josephine Baker. She is the author of Parallel Lives: Five Victorian Marriages and Writing of Women: Essays in a Renaissance.

With what baggage will it freight their minds?

Happily, it should convince them that writing is not an activity alien to women. From Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe in the Middle Ages to Alice Walker and Leslie Marmon Silko, women have produced a large and varied body of writing in English. This anthology includes close to a hundred and fifty authors, from many countries. The numbers are smaller the further back one goes, but the surprises are greater. In the fifteenth century Margery Kempe wrote about being tempted to commit adultery by a man who refused her when she consented. In the seventeenth century Aphra Behn wrote a poem about male impotence, called "The Disappointment." It's also good to know that women can write dazzlingly about nothing at all—like the dying Alice James, who described the seductive moment when she felt herself "floated for the first time into the deep sea of divine *cession*."

The burden that Gilbert and Gubar have imposed on women of the future is the burden of a tradition—a nurturant tradition. It used to be that women writers, working in silence, exile, and cunning, sought out other women writers to admire. Virginia Woolf wrote about Dorothy Wordsworth and Christina Rossetti, among others, and these essays helped her "self-definition as a woman writer," Gilbert and Gubar say. "For if women *had* written, and written successfully, women *could* write." To Virginia Woolf and her successors, the female literary past was, according to Gilbert and Gubar, "empowering rather than intimidating." Now that the female literary past has been enshrined in this gigantic anthology, the observation that it has been empowering in the past becomes a moral imperative for the future. Finding and loving our literary ancestors is no longer a secret pleasure and private solace but a filial duty.

In editorial comments throughout the book Gilbert and Gubar present a female tradition of support and encouragement, a literature "empowered by female community." Eudora Welty's debt to Katherine Anne Porter is noted, as is Elizabeth Bishop's loyalty to her "major female literary mentor," Marianne Moore. Not for women is the kind of literary past Harold Bloom describes, which creates anxiety and provokes rebellion. Not for women is a literary history filled with conflict and marked

by aggressive self-definition. Whereas little boys, even wimpy little boy writers, are allowed to hate their literary fathers and have their rebellions, little girls, even rebellious little girl writers, are expected to be good and love their literary mothers.

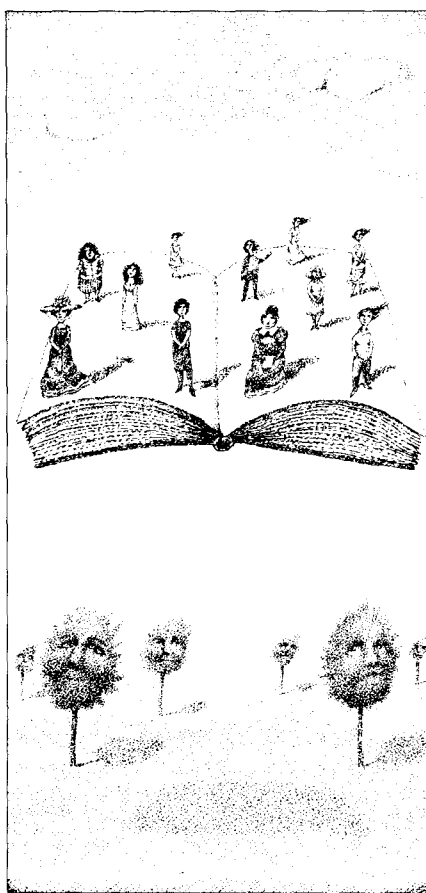
This anthology takes the model of a women's therapy group and extends it over time and space to art: women join hands across the ages to enhance their self-definition as women writers and to help one another create. Some writers don't want to belong to such a group. Because the editors have been so inclusive, because they apologize for having been "unable to represent such increasingly self-aware movements as those currently being pioneered by Chicanas and Italian-American women," one wonders at their omissions. A few I noticed among contemporary writers (of whom sixty-one are included): Ann Beattie, Anne Tyler, Joan Didion, Susan Sontag, Renata Adler, Annie Dillard, Cynthia Ozick. The suspicion arises that at least one or two of these individual talents declined to make one with *The Tradition in English*. In her lifetime, as Gilbert and Gubar tell us, Elizabeth Bishop refused to let her work be included in collections of women's writings. Her executor allows it now.

Why might a woman writer prefer not to be a Woman Writer? Perhaps for the same reason a frog dislikes to be used as a demonstration of the nervous system. It's afraid that might be all there is to life. A tension, a potential conflict, exists between women writers who sometimes do not want to be thought of as Women Writers or, indeed, even as women, and feminist literary critics who need them to be their material. The conflict of interest is, I think, insufficiently acknowledged. The male tradition, which has never assumed that writers, editors, and critics all have a common interest simply on the grounds of gender, seems to me in this case at any rate the more humane.

"Literature by women" is in fact a controversial category, not self-evidently valid like "English literature" or "American literature." Who could imagine refusing to be included in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*? Who, on the other hand, could take seriously a *Norton Anthology of Literature by Men*? The editors dodge this important issue and in doing so render the anthology covertly polemical.

The more feminist the writers, the

more comfortable the editors seem to feel about including them. Susan Griffin, represented by one poem, is praised for being "consistently productive and persistently feminist in her writing," whereas excuses must be made for Denise Levertov: "Though she does not define herself as a feminist, her poetry frequently expresses a distinctively female perspective on the world, celebrating the values of nature and nurture." So a hierarchy is established: women who write, Women Writers, who have a distinctively female perspective and celebrate values that Gilbert and Gubar con-



sider female (like nature and nurture), and self-consciously feminist writers. But in that case, where are the important feminist nonfiction writers of recent times? Where are Betty Friedan, Susan Brownmiller, Germaine Greer, Gloria Steinem? The book is too political for a good anthology of literature and yet it is not an anthology of feminist writings. Despite the editors' conviction that the texts they've included, "at the very least, suggest the contours of the canon into which readers will be able to assimilate the works of many other women authors," the grounds for their choices are unclear.

CERTAINLY THIS is a democratic anthology—truly great writers get little more representation than the merely interesting. It is best read as a collection of works about women's experience rather than as a collection of great works by women. Fair enough. Why shouldn't content occasionally be allowed to take precedence over form? The emphasis on female perspective leads to the inclusion of some wonderful pieces—for example, Ursula Le Guin's "Sur," a story about an imaginary expedition to the South Pole in 1909 by a group of South American women who think, "If Captain Scott can do it, why can't we?" They make it to the pole but find the event anticlimactic. It's a delightful parable about the female preference for affiliation over achievement. And there's the rub. The story has been selected to make a point about female nature. So has story after story, poem after poem. Occasionally, an effect other than that of didacticism is produced. An excerpt from Anaïs Nin's diary about the attraction between her and June Miller overcomes the deadly pointedness of the anthology. Presumably, the passage has been selected to illustrate erotic attraction between women, but the passage wins. It *is* erotic.

True, if you want the red-hot experience of literature, you do not go to a Norton Anthology. It is a teaching tool, not to be faulted for not being Palgrave's *Golden Treasury*. Still, the amount of apparatus, as opposed to art, in this volume is appalling. The literature scarcely has a chance. The editors seem to pick the shortest piece by each writer and then engulf it in a critical essay that leaves no question of how you should respond. Isak Dinesen is represented by "The Blank Page," perhaps the briefest story she wrote. Jean Rhys, a great story-writer, is given only two pages to prove herself, and barely can. One story serves to represent—or misrepresent—Eudora Welty, Tillie Olsen, Carson McCullers, Muriel Spark, Doris Lessing, Willa Cather, Sarah Orne Jewett, and Grace Paley, among others. So you come to depend on the critical essay. How would you know that Dorothy Parker was funny if the editors didn't tell you so, and didn't quote, in the headnote, Parker's quip "Brevity is the soul of Lingerie"? You'd never know it on the basis of her story "You Were Perfectly Fine," one of her most mannered and dated—but one of her shortest.

Sometimes the literature seems posi-

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THOMAS VICTOR

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tively to exist so that Gilbert and Gubar may write about its author. Alice Dunbar-Nelson is represented by a twenty-one-line poem and discussed in a considerably longer essay, which tells about her work in behalf of civil rights and world peace (black women are excused from the insistent pressure to join hands with other women—questions of race are allowed to take precedence over those of gender) and also about her marriages to the poet Paul Laurence Dunbar and then to the publisher of the *Wilmington Advocate*.

Indeed, *The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women* is marked by a courtesy to husbands that we never see toward wives in predominantly male anthologies. Joyce Carol Oates, we are told, is married to "the scholar Raymond Smith." Ursula Le Guin met her husband, "the historian Charles A. Le Guin," when she was studying in Paris on a Fulbright. Margaret Drabble married an actor and began writing backstage, when she was pregnant. The domestic details are welcome, of course, as gossip always is, and in some ways useful. They suggest a context of domesticity for women's writing in which every act of creativity becomes a miracle. But sometimes the notations are ludicrous: "The daughter of Isidore and Nan Gordimer, she attended . . ." And sometimes they are misleading: "The mother of two children, Paley captures . . ." Would anyone think of saying, "The father of ten children, Dickens captures . . ."? It privileges experience over art (as does this entire anthology), suggesting that there is a necessary connection between the experience of mothering and the ability to render it in art.

Gigantism afflicts new fields; modesty comes with endurance. *The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women* cannot resist, in its historical introductions, presenting much of human history anew. The rule seems to be that no proper name can go unexplained; the assumption, that the reader knows nothing and must learn all from this anthology. Thus, on one page we have "the poet-suffragist Alice Meynell," "the colonial apologist Rudyard Kipling," the "activist-feminist writers Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Crystal Eastman," and "the Viennese psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud (1856–1939)." Some selections seem to exist to be footnoted, so that essential information may be perpetuated. One of these is Dorothy Parker's poem "Song of One of the Girls," which names many great

women in history and permits explanations like "Sappho was a Greek lyric poet of the seventh century B.C." and "Madame Récamier (1777–1849) was a French beauty and friend of Madame de Staël." It is the kind of thing you give to girls to make them proud of being female, like *The Great Women of History Cut-Out Book*.

Mind-numbing generalizations are endemic to this sort of anthology. They seem more egregious here, because *The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women* might have limited itself. Instead, in order to talk about the flowering of women's literature in the twentieth century, the editors feel they must recount the rise to power of "Benito Mussolini, *Il Duce* ('the leader')" and of "Adolph Hitler, the so-called *Fuehrer* ('leader')." We must know that bomber pilots in the Second World War were more alienated from their victims than those in the First World War. We must know about DNA and ICBMs as well as IUDs.

This kind of writing generates its own connections. American writers went to Paris in the twenties not because it was cheap to live there but "because the new availability and speed of steamships, railroads, and motorcars had made long-range travel easy." Blacks, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, "and other disadvantaged groups" move into the decaying cities of America. Members of the white middle class sit in the suburbs watching *Ozzie and Harriet*. They develop an ethic of togetherness, maturity, and adjustment. The Southern Gothic writers come along to depict immaturity and perversity. Movements sweep across the pages in waves of abstraction. Everything fits. But it has been an effort. Sometimes one's heart goes out to the editors, who have taken on so much. "Charting the movements of twentieth-century writers, painters, and musicians," they confess, "can be dizzying." Sometimes one's heart goes out to the student who must stay awake through prose like this: "To complicate matters further, the new researches of anthropologists and archeologists led to a kind of cultural relativism that fostered skepticism about the nature of human society itself." It seems a lot to ask of the reader, to encompass both the great sweep of twentieth-century history and the marital history of Alice Dunbar-Nelson.

The critical introductions in *The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women* are better—indeed, they are awesome—when they address themselves more

narrowly to women's literature and women in literature. The editors provide a brilliant interpretation of *Frankenstein*, in which both Frankenstein the creator and his creation, the lonely outcast monster, are seen as images of female experience. They are excellent at describing the female angle in various writers' work—Le Guin's anthropological interest in gender, Muriel Spark's interest in communities of women. They refreshingly bring together Daisy Buchanan and Brett Ashley as flappers, and see the flapper as an image of the destructive power of women, an expression of male fear. They provide a welcome account of fifties male writing from a female point of view, an account that speculates that Second World War pinups led to a fetishizing of female body parts in the writing of Henry Miller. They zero in with deadly accuracy on male literary sexism, both that of writers, like Norman Mailer, who commit acts of aggression against their female characters and

that of critics like William Gass, who criticizes women writers for lacking "that blood congested genital drive which energizes every great style."

Read as a polemic, *The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women* constitutes the best extended piece of writing there is on literature by and about women. Gilbert and Gubar have amassed more information about women writers than exists in any other document. They have unlocked what Carolyn Kizer calls "the world's best-kept secret: Merely the private lives of one-half of humanity." For finding lines like that, one should be grateful to them. Along with much that is sweet and much that is useful, however, they have thrust into the book bags of the future the ambivalent gift of a female tradition wrapped in a seventies-style political sentimentality that insists we should love one another because we are all in it together. And as an anthology of literature, this one weighs on the spirit like a two-pound balloon. □

never struck it rich, but he prospered sufficiently to return to Belgium in comfortable retirement. The memoir that he wrote in his old age is a splendid piece of Americana, for Perlot was a witty, gingery, intelligent man with a sharp eye for significant detail, a neat touch with anecdote, and a distaste for authority, especially that of any church. His book, privately printed and ignored for years, has been translated and thoroughly annotated by the late Helen Harding Bretnor, who deserves the gratitude of all readers with a taste for the history of the Old West.

THE ADIRONDACKS by Nathan Farb. *Rizzoli*, \$35.00 and \$19.95. The exploitation-versus-preservation row lasted nearly fifty years, but in 1894 conservationists prevailed and the State of New York established the "forever wild" status of the forests of the Adirondack Park. This park is as large as Massachusetts with Rhode Island thrown in and contains scenery of great and diverse beauty, which Mr. Farb has beautifully photographed. He is evidently undeterred by snowdrifts, brambles, bogs, underbrush, or rock faces, and his work is certain to please any wilderness-lover.

BRIEF REVIEWS



CHINA UNKNOWN with an introduction by David Bonavia. *Times*, \$24.95. This is essentially a picture book, compiled from the work of many photographers and illustrating the rich variety of costumes, amusements, and occupations among the minority groups that exist on the fringes of the People's Republic of China. Whether through sympathy, an eye to future tourist trade, or a recognition of the impossible, the Chinese government has recently relaxed efforts to deter such minorities from doing things their own way. The decision may even have been aesthetic, for the faces, clothes, dwellings, and animals displayed in these pictures are a delight to the eye. Mr. Bonavia's introduction briskly characterizes each small nation and describes the terrain it occupies, for it is the nature of the ground that determines rural activity. A Mongol herdsman is not as yet in any danger of being shoved into an industrial assembly line. One hopes he never will be.

WOMAN WANTED by Joanna McClelland Glass. *St. Martin's*, \$13.95. Emma Rowena Shea Riley, downcast by divorce and bored with the typing pool, hires out as

housekeeper to a widower, a Yale professor with a son who "sounds delinquent" but proves to be merely an over-excitable poet. Bright, sharp-tongued, and (by implication, since a first-person narrator can hardly make the point directly) a beauty, Emma quickly becomes a bone of erotic contention between Goddards *père et fils*. The ensuing comedy contains lively dialogue (Ms. Glass is a playwright as well as a novelist) and a steadily amusing muddle of collisions and cross-purposes.

GOLDSEEKER by Jean-Nicolas Perlot. *Yale*, \$29.95. In 1850 Perlot, aged twenty-six and discontented with prospects in his native Belgium, joined the crew that a jerry-built French mining company was shipping to the California gold fields. The company had collapsed by the time Perlot reached Monterey—six watery months out of Le Havre—but with a head full of gilded dreams and tenderfoot ignorance he went prospecting anyway. During the twenty-two years that he spent in the United States, he became a gold miner, an accomplished frontiersman, an amateur anthropologist, a landscape and truck gardener, and a real-estate speculator. He

AN EMBARRASSMENT OF RICHES by James Howard Kunstler. *Dial*, \$15.95. The premise of Mr. Kunstler's novel is deceptively reasonable. Thomas Jefferson, who was in fact annoyed by the current European notion that New World animals were small and inferior, might very well have sent an expedition into the newly acquired Louisiana Territory to search for the giant ground sloth. He never did, but Mr. Kunstler offers readers an uproariously inventive account of just such an expedition, as reported by young Samuel Walker, who constitutes half of it. The other half is Sam's Uncle William, a botanist of international reputation. Their journey amounts to alternations of frying pan and fire, with an occasional hornets' nest on the side. Mr. Kunstler's imitation of the slightly starchy idiom of the early nineteenth century is expert and provides piquant contrast to the preposterous misadventures that he chronicles.

THE BOOK OF PHOEBE by Mary-Ann Ti-rone Smith. *Doubleday*, \$15.95. Phoebe, who tells her own story, is a brilliant Yale senior with an unsuitable problem; thanks to a faulty IUD, she is pregnant. She is also opposed to abortion for strictly personal reasons. Fortunately she has a dear old friend in Paris with whom she can take

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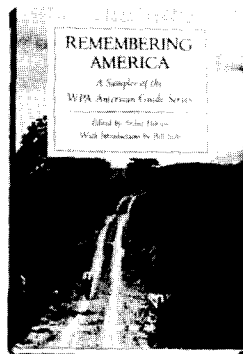
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refuge until the child is born, and off she goes to what turns out to be the unexpected. It is also, from the reader's point of view, the unlikely. Despite the contemporary atmosphere and language that would have been unprintable not very long ago, this novel is really an old-fashioned hammock-reading romance in which the Spirited Heroine triumphs over All Adversity.

POPOL VUH translated by Dennis Tedlock. Simon and Schuster, \$19.95. Translations of ancient Mesoamerican documents are

all too often bewildering—in part, no doubt, because so few such documents survive. The book-burning zeal of early Spanish missionaries has left scholars with a paucity of material for cross-checking meanings either literal or implied. Professor Tedlock's translation of the Creation story of the Quiché Maya is notable for clear and lively style. Even so, the text requires the support of an elaborate introduction in explaining the relationship between the activities—mostly violent—of the gods and the complexities of the Mayan calendar, and giving the intriguing history of the manuscript that Professor Tedlock has put into modern English with the help and advice of a modern Mayan wiseman. The Quiché Creators prove to be engagingly inept deities who have no trouble with land and sea but bumble three times in making people. The book includes notes that reveal the awesome problems of translating a Mayan language, and a glossary that is, for the casual reader, indispensable.

CARPENTER'S GOTHIC by William Gaddis. Elizabeth Sifton-Viking, \$16.95. Mr.

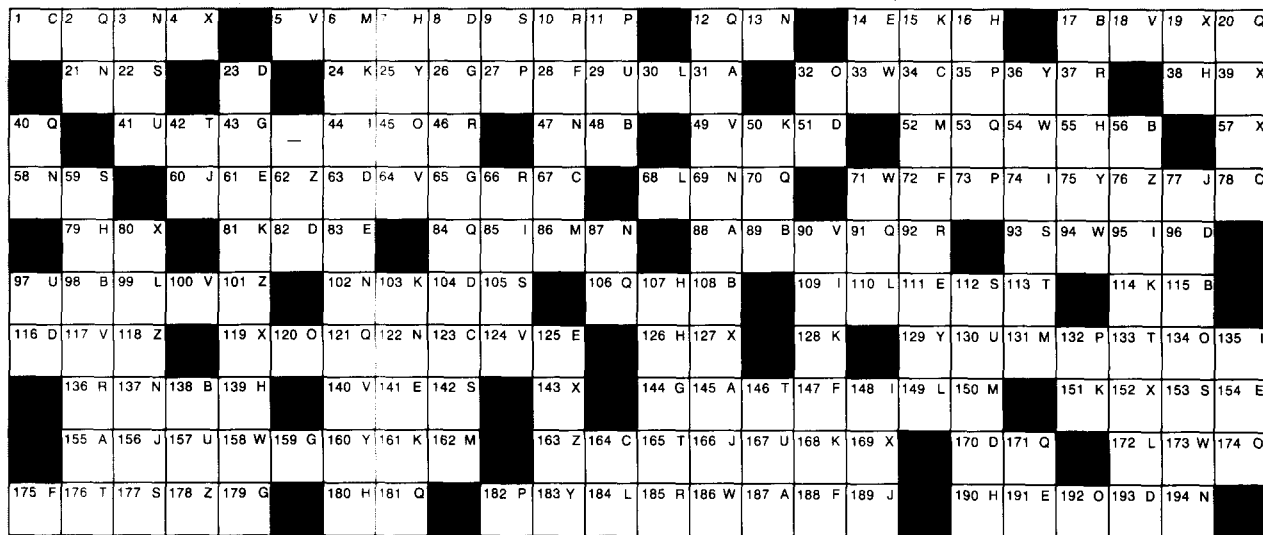
Gaddis has constructed his latest novel in the manner of Greek tragedy, in the sense that all the action takes place offstage. The cast, and therefore the reader as well, are confined to a house (carpenter's gothic, naturally) where horrendous events past or present are reported by messenger, telephone, or recent participant. In Greek tragedy, however, the nature and causes of offstage proceedings are made perfectly clear, a point that Mr. Gaddis has either overlooked or chosen to ignore. His ruthlessly naturalistic dialogue goes on and on, but the nature of his characters' enterprises remains murky. Most of these characters are damaged people, and the majority of them are up to no good. All of them are so tiresomely unpleasant that the meticulous reading that might elucidate their operations seems not worth the trouble.

—Phoebe-Lou Adams

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BY DOROTHY OSBORNE

The letters of clue answers, when put in the appropriately numbered squares, will spell out a quotation. The first letters of clue answers spell the author and source of the quotation.



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| H. Jiminy Cricket's taxonomic order | 79 55 38 107 126 139 190 16 7 180 | U. "The Father of Texas" | 130 157 97 41 29 167 |
| I. NBA Midwest Division champs of 1985 | 109 85 135 74 148 44 95 | V. 1939 Garbo classic | 100 90 124 18 49 5 117 64 140 |
| J. "Buck and Bubbles" specialty | 189 156 77 60 66 | W. <i>The Yellow Christ</i> painter | 71 54 33 158 94 186 173 |
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Answers to the July Puzzler, "ACROSTIC"

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
A	T	H	E	Y	B	U	I	L	T	T	H	E	S
B	H	I	P	T	I	T	A	N	I	C	T	O	S
C	A	I	L	T	H	E		O	C	E		A	N
D	B	L	U	E	A		N		D		T		H
E	E	Y	T	H	O	U		G		H	T		T
F	H	E	Y		H	A	D		A	S	H		I
G	P	T		H	A		T	T	H	E			W
H	A	T	E		R		W	O	U	L		D	N
I	E	V	E	R		G	O	T	H		R	O	U
J	G	H	I		T	W	A	S		O	N	H	E
K	R	M		A	I	D	E		N	T	R	I	P
L	A	N	I					C	E	B	E	R	G
M	S	T	R	U	C	K	T	H	E	S	H	I	P

Initial letters of the answers spell: *It was sad when that great ship went down*

Clues. 1. I-SLAM-A-BAD 2. T(H)UG 3. WAST-E (anag. + e) 4. AU-GUST 5. SH(ANT)Y 6. S(HOT-G)UN 7. A(PHID) (anag. + p) 8. DUCT (homophone) 9. W-IS-CON-SIN 10. H(ITCH)E'S 11. EDDY (double def.) 12. NO-OK 13. THOU (hidden) 14. HATCHWAYS (anag.) 15. A-THROB (a + anag.) 16. THIN(KIN)G 17. GOATHERD (anag.) 18. ROU(LET)TE 19. ENIAC (rev.) 20. A-B(O)ARD 21. TRUMAN (C)APOTE (anag. + c) 22. SH-RUBBERY 23. HAT-CHET 24. INTERPR-ET (printer anag.) 25. PHI-LATELY 26. WROUGHT (hidden) 27. EIGHT (anag.) 28. NIGHTCAP (anag.) 29. THREW (homophone) 30. D(HOT)I (I'd rev.) 31. OPERETTAS (anag.) 32. WIN-TRY 33. NAVEI (homophone)

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Credit Card # _____ Exp. Date _____

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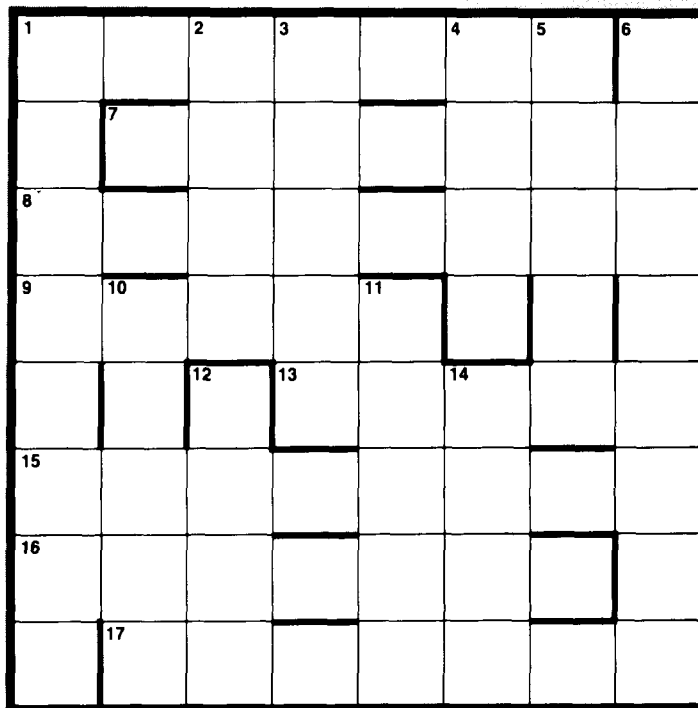
8/85 Send to: The Atlantic Bookstore, 8 Arlington Street, Boston, MA 02116
For more information on these titles, please see pages 78, 87, 90, and 92.

THE PUZZLER

BY EMILY COX AND HENRY RATHVON

DOUBLE CROSS

Pairs of clue answers in this puzzle must share accommodations in the grid. Every square is occupied by two letters; in squares where answers intersect, each letter belongs to one Across entry and one Down entry. The solver must determine which horizontal answers intersect with which vertical answers. The order of each pair of clues is arbitrary, as is their order of entry in the diagram. Answers include four proper words.



*The answers to last month's
Puzzler appear on page 95.*

ACROSS

1. Double-cross includes a fission product (7) (2 words)
Plant pentacle in wet soil (7)
7. Rug strand gulped back by porker (7)
Unite around one GI (7)
8. Huge decline in fossil fuel (8)
Asian born outside gets white (8)
9. Poems all about race site (5)
Pacifies with \$100 gift for the poor (5)
13. Loud partying, eats? (5)
Bring wines back with leather thong (5)
15. Mac translated Croatian (8)
A prisoner put in along with a strangler? (8)
16. Fruit in bed at the end of All Fools' Day? (7)

No-good rotters making comebacks (7)

17. Look down around a king's shoe (7)
Vouchers for a Spielberg hit grabbed by pests (7)

DOWN

1. Air-conditioned car interrupts stick game (8)
Scottish queen gains zero profit, regarding finances (8)
2. Heard of room for auction (4)
Lids, see, flipped (4)
3. Reserved a jackass going up (5)
Wise up to streetcars (5)
4. One getting married is spellbound (4)

Apparently, certain breads are leavened (4)

5. Poet is obscure as yet (5)
Club Med is coveting harbors (5)
6. Sparkling silver debris (8)
Illegally enter resort, cutting into lock (8)
10. Wishes for woods (5)
Modify apartment after sale offer (5)
11. Bird found in East Orkneys (5)
Holy city came apart around start of century (5)
12. Fix fudge (4)
Piece of zucchini—one eats it with pasta (4)
14. Castle cheat (4)
Stake in a tangled net (4)

Note: The instructions above are for this month's puzzle only. It is assumed that you know how to decipher clues. For a complete introduction to clue-solving, send an addressed, stamped envelope to The Atlantic Puzzler, 8 Arlington Street, Boston, Mass. 02116.

How dare The Glenlivet be so expensive?

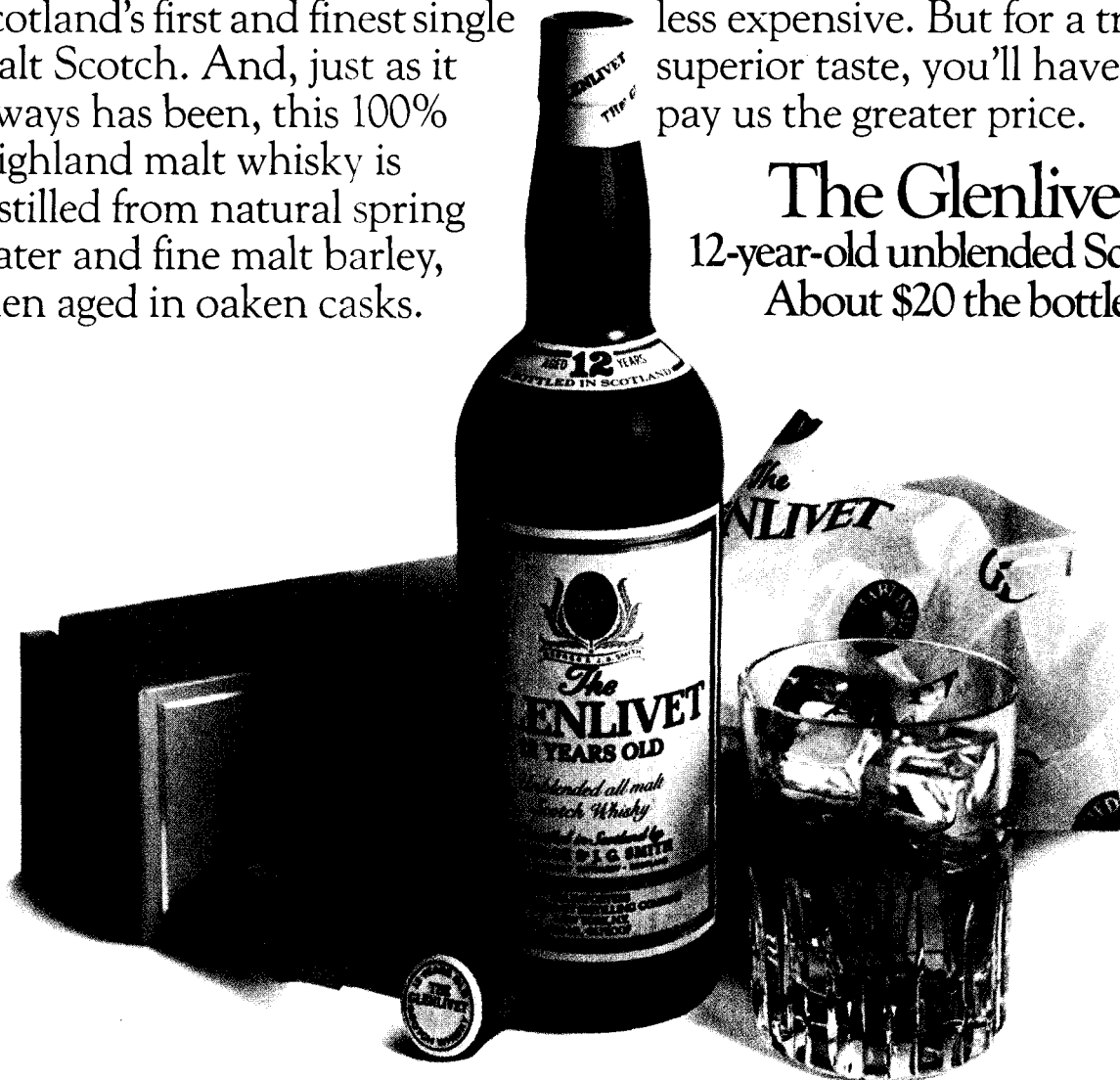
How dare we place such a premium on our 12-year-old Scotch? The same reason great vintage wines and fine champagne cognacs are so expensive. Taste. Just one sip and you'll know that The Glenlivet has a taste that's decidedly superior.

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Of course you may elect to purchase a good Scotch that's less expensive. But for a truly superior taste, you'll have to pay us the greater price.

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